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from : General Secretariat
to : Delegations
Subject : **Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010**
- Council conclusions

Delegations will find attached the conclusions adopted by the (Environment) Council on 18 December 2006.

Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

- Council conclusions -

RECALLING the objective established by the European Council in Gothenburg in 2001 to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 within the EU, reaffirmed in the Lisbon Strategy relaunched in March 2005 and in the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy of June 2006; ALSO RECALLING the global target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010;

BUILDING UPON the European Community Biodiversity Strategy adopted 1998 and its four Action Plans adopted 2001 and RECALLING the outcome of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and of the third meeting of the Parties (MOP 3) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the CBD;

UNDERLINING the intrinsic value of biodiversity and its essential role in sustaining life and livelihoods, economic and social development and human well-being and REAFFIRMING the importance of biodiversity for the achievement of environmental, economic and social goals globally and in the EU, as well as for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

STRESSING the importance of promoting a better understanding of biodiversity worldwide; CONSIDERING that the CBD is essentially a Convention supporting all life on earth;

DEEPLY CONCERNED by the continuing decline in biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU and at global level; UNDERLINING the urgent need for intensified and coordinated efforts to halt this trend, in particular in the light of the short time remaining to meet the 2010 commitments;

THE COUNCIL:

1. WELCOMES the Commission Communication *Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and Beyond: sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being* defining key policy areas and setting out priority objectives for 2007-2013;
2. SUPPORTS the ten priority objectives contained in the Communication and ENDORSES the general approach of strengthening integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into relevant horizontal and sectoral policies;
3. WELCOMES *the EU Action Plan to 2010 and Beyond* further defining targets and actions and LOOKS FORWARD TO its further consideration, while INVITING the Commission and the Member States to proceed urgently with the implementation of the Action Plan as appropriate;
4. EMPHASISES the importance of strengthened cooperation and coordination between the Commission and the Member States in the further refinement and implementation of the EU Action Plan and CALLS UPON the Commission to further develop appropriate processes and effective structures for this purpose;
5. INVITES the Commission to start a process, involving stakeholders, for the development of a long-term EU vision for biodiversity, as a frame for further policy development;
6. RECOGNIZES the important ongoing work for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity both at Community and Member State level *inter alia* in creating the Natura 2000 network; REAFFIRMS the commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and URGES the Commission and the Member States to accelerate efforts to this end;

Biodiversity in the EU

7. URGES the Commission and the Member States to strengthen efforts to finalize the Natura 2000 network both on land and at sea, and to ensure effective management and adequate financing of the network;
8. CALLS UPON the Commission and the Member States to assess and strengthen, where necessary, the coherence, connectivity and resilience of the Natura 2000 network as well as the resilience of the ecosystems therein; STRESSES the importance of land-use planning and UNDERLINES the responsibility of the Member States in regional and local planning in this context;
9. RECOGNIZES the importance of the high biodiversity of the outermost regions and of efforts for its conservation and sustainable use;
10. EMPHASISES the importance of best available scientific knowledge as a basis for safeguarding the EU's most important habitats and species and CALLS UPON the Commission to initiate a scientific review of species, and of habitats as a second step, listed in the annexes of the Habitats Directive, building, *inter alia*, on the analysis of the Member States' reports under the Habitats Directive and in the light of progress made by 2010;
11. URGES the Commission and the Member States to further strengthen the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services considerations and targets into policies and programmes in all relevant sectors;
12. URGES the Commission and the Member States to use the opportunities provided for in agricultural, rural development, forest and fisheries policies to support the biodiversity target, both within protected areas and in the wider countryside and marine environment;

13. EMPHASISES the need to strengthen efforts to protect marine biodiversity to reach the 2010 target; UNDERLINES the importance of developing and implementing marine strategies with the aim of achieving or maintaining good environmental status in the marine environment; CALLS UPON the Member States to further reduce pollution and nutrient load from agricultural and other diffuse sources as well as from urban, industrial and other point sources; STRESSES the importance of the timely and effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Recommendation;
14. UNDERLINES the role of forests for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and URGES the Commission and the Member States to pursue efforts to implement the EU Forest Action Plan;
15. UNDERLINES the important role of soils for biodiversity protection, climate change mitigation and the fight against desertification;
16. RECOGNIZES the need to strengthen measures to ensure conservation, and availability for use, of genetic diversity in agriculture, in particular in situ and on-farm conservation;
17. CALLS UPON the Commission and the Member States to reinforce the compatibility of regional and territorial development with biodiversity objectives, *inter alia* by increasing synergies and by optimizing positive outcomes for biodiversity, and by preventing, minimizing or mitigating any possible negative impact on biodiversity of projects supported by cohesion and structural funds; URGES the Commission and the Member States to ensure the adequate treatment of biodiversity concerns in Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments;

18. CALLS UPON the Commission to assess gaps in the current legal, policy and economic framework for the prevention of introduction and for the control and eradication of invasive alien species; INVITES the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to prepare an EU strategy and an effective early warning system, taking into account biogeographic regions, on the basis of the CBD Guiding Principles on Invasive Alien Species, taking into account the Bern Convention European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species and recognizing the efforts made by relevant Conventions and Organisations such as the IPPC and the EPPO;
19. EMPHASISES the importance of fully implementing the EU legislative framework on Genetically Modified Organisms, notably its provisions for environmental risk assessment, monitoring plans and identification systems; RECOGNIZES the importance of practical improvements to the way it is implemented in order to improve its scientific consistency and transparency, bearing in mind the recommendations presented by the Commission at the meeting of the Environment Council of 27 June 2006;

The EU and global biodiversity

20. RECALLS the renewed EU SDS and its objective of including sustainable development concerns, including the objective of halting biodiversity loss by 2010, in all EU external policies, *inter alia* by making sustainable development an objective of multilateral and bilateral development cooperation; URGES the Commission and the Member States to improve at global level the consistency of EU actions that have an impact on biodiversity;
21. STRONGLY SUPPORTS the strengthening of international governance for biodiversity; STRESSES the importance of effective implementation of the CBD and REITERATES the need for mutual supportiveness between Multilateral Environmental Agreements and enhanced cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and processes as well as the need for strengthening synergies and, as appropriate, consistency between them at all levels;

22. WELCOMES the outcome of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 8); EMPHASISES the importance of strengthening the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and of supporting capacity building to this end; STRESSES the importance of making further progress on the thematic programmes of work and cross-cutting issues, including the full implementation of the Programme of Work on protected areas in line with the agreed schedule, and of completing the work in the ad hoc Open-ended Working Group on ABS on an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing at the earliest possible time before COP 10; URGES the Commission and the Member States to play an active and constructive role in these processes and CALLS UPON the Commission and the Member States to ensure the implementation of the CBD Bonn Guidelines and other ABS-related agreements;
23. EMPHASISES the importance of the full implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and of the MOP 3 decision on documentation requirements for transboundary movements of GMOs;
24. REITERATES the support for a process of elaborating an implementation agreement on the protection of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea; REGARDS this as an important contribution to achieving, *inter alia*, the objective agreed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of establishing representative networks of marine protected areas by the year 2012; CONFIRMS the CBD's role in providing scientific and technical advice for the establishment of protected areas in the high seas; RECOGNIZES the importance of urgent action on tackling destructive fishing practices in contributing to the achievement of the 2010 target; EMPHASISES the importance of the EU taking a leading role in these processes;
25. CALLS UPON the Member States and the Commission to start timely preparations on key issues for the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 9) which will be held in May 2008 in Bonn, Germany;

26. REITERATES the commitment outlined in the 2005 "European Consensus on Development" to the eradication of poverty in the context of sustainable development, including the pursuit of the MDGs, as the primary and overarching objective of EU development cooperation; RECALLS that the Community will support the efforts undertaken by its partner countries to incorporate environment into development and help to increase their capacity to implement Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including stronger support to the implementation of the CBD as a means to halt biodiversity loss and promote biosafety and sustainable management of biodiversity; RECALLS that a strengthened approach will be applied in all Community activities to mainstream environment as a cross-cutting issue;
27. WELCOMES the Message from Paris "*Integrating biodiversity into European development cooperation*" of 19-21 September 2006 which emphasises that biodiversity plays a crucial role in the fight against poverty and is a core development issue;
28. CALLS UPON the Commission to support the partner countries and regions to integrate biodiversity in their development strategies, and based on needs prioritised by partner countries and regions, to enhance funding for, and to improve the mainstreaming of, biodiversity considerations in its external assistance programmes, *inter alia* by preparing Country and Regional Environment Profiles with specific attention to the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services and taking them into account when drawing up Country and Regional Strategy Papers in conjunction with partner countries and regions, and in consultation with Member States;
29. CALLS UPON the Member States to enhance funding, as appropriate according to the needs prioritised by partner countries and regions, for biodiversity and to improve the mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations in their development cooperation programmes;

30. In this context, WELCOMES the last replenishment of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) that with the strong support by Member States reached the target of EUR 2.46 billion for GEF4 (2006 –2010). Further, REAFFIRMS the important role of the GEF as a key financial mechanism of the CBD in support of developing countries' efforts to meet the objectives of the Convention;
31. URGES the Commission and the Member States to identify the major impacts of trade on biodiversity and to adopt appropriate measures to prevent or mitigate negative impacts, as well as to encourage positive trade practices; INVITES the Commission to prepare Sustainability Impact Assessments in this context;
32. CALLS UPON the Commission to continue efforts to promote integration of biodiversity in the WTO Doha negotiations, and to enhance mutual supportiveness between multilateral trade agreements and biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as well as bilateral and regional agreements;
33. REITERATES the importance of strengthening efforts to combat illegal logging of timber and associated trade within the framework of the EU FLEGT Action Plan, the St. Petersburg Ministerial Declaration (ENA-FLEG) and other regional FLEG processes; and WELCOMES the consideration by the Commission of developing possible additional options to combat illegal logging;
34. URGES the Commission to explore options for further ensuring that imports of wild fauna and flora, including wild birds, to the European Union are fully supportive of biodiversity objectives and do not pose a risk for their survival in the wild; WELCOMES the process initiated by the Commission to assess the effectiveness, including the consideration of a possible review, of the wildlife trade regulations; UNDERLINES the importance of the effective implementation of the CITES Convention and the EC implementing legislation; STRESSES the need for capacity-building to facilitate the implementation of policies for the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife in developing countries and effective implementation of the CITES Convention in these countries, ensuring complementarity of assistance provided;

35. CALLS UPON the Member States to reinforce efforts to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species and CALLS UPON Member States and the Commission to strengthen a coordinated response and actions for the enforcement of CITES;

Biodiversity and climate change

36. STRONGLY SUPPORTS the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to minimise climate change impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services; UNDERLINES the positive contribution of biodiversity in combating climate change;
37. EMPHASISES the need to prevent and minimise adverse impacts on, and to maximise opportunities for the enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystem services which might arise from climate change adaptation and mitigation measures; EXPRESSES its commitment to exploring options for synergetic approaches that reduce emissions and enhance biodiversity, including through avoiding deforestation;
38. STRESSES the importance of strengthening the resilience of EU biodiversity to climate change and INVITES the Commission to develop with the Member States a comprehensive programme of priority actions, taking into account long-term cost-effectiveness, to support biodiversity adaptation to climate change in the EU;
39. UNDERLINES, in this respect, the need for an assessment of habitats and species in the EU most at risk from climate change;

The knowledge base

40. UNDERLINES the critical need to strengthen the understanding of biodiversity and ecosystem services, *inter alia*, by substantially strengthening, under the 7th Framework Programme for research and under national research programmes, the European Research Area for biodiversity;

41. EMPHASISES the importance of allocating adequate and targeted financial resources to biodiversity research and dissemination of its results under the 7th Framework Programme;
42. RECOGNIZES the work done by the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy to identify and promote policy-relevant research and STRESSES the importance of transforming knowledge into appropriate actions;
43. ENCOURAGES the Commission and Member States to consider options, including building on existing instruments, for strengthening research-based advice on biodiversity and ecosystem services to policy makers, taking into account the ongoing consultative process to assess the need, scope and possible forms of an international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity;

Supporting measures

44. STRESSES the need for broadening the finance basis for biodiversity and ecosystem services; URGES Member States to make best possible use of available co-financing instruments, in accordance with the objectives of these instruments;
45. INVITES the Commission and the Member States to use a wide range of economic instruments, voluntary agreements, incentives and market-based approaches to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as well as the maintenance and recovery of ecosystems services. Further progress is also needed on the elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies;
46. EMPHASISES the need for considering adequate funding of biodiversity, and in particular, the Natura 2000 network, in the 2008-2009 review of the Financial Perspectives;

47. STRESSES the need to continue to update and implement National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and UNDERLINES the need to enhance coordination and complementarity between Member State and Community level biodiversity strategies and action plans;
48. STRESSES the need for partnerships and strategic alliances with, *inter alia*, the private sector; ENCOURAGES the development of biodiversity and business partnerships; RECOGNIZES the important work done by the Countdown 2010 Initiative;
49. UNDERLINES the importance of the active involvement of European citizens in biodiversity conservation and the need for more effective communication to this end; CALLS UPON the Commission and the Member States to develop, finance and implement communication, education, awareness and participation strategies, taking into account different national circumstances and needs;
50. INVITES the Commission to submit to the Council and the Parliament mid-term and final reports on progress towards the targets of the Communication and the Action Plan;
51. URGES the Commission to streamline biodiversity reporting and to make full use of Member States' reports under existing reporting obligations to avoid unnecessary new reporting; STRESSES the need to align the reporting and evaluation of the Action Plan with the review of other EU policies, programmes and budgets to enable more effective integration of biodiversity concerns and commitments in these;
52. LOOKS FORWARD to the early finalisation of appropriate biodiversity indicators to assess achievement of the 2010 target as developed in the context of the SEBI 2010 project and will consider endorsement of biodiversity indicators; also LOOKS FORWARD to the finalisation, endorsement and use of a biodiversity indicator in the structural indicator set and in the list of Sustainable Development Indicators.