



The mission of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS) is to ensure that research contributes to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE USE¹ OF BIODIVERSITY:
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE**

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH STRATEGY

Meeting under the Greek Presidency of the EU
Lesvos, Greece, 23rd – 26th May 2003

“Health is not simply the absence of sickness.” – Hannah Green

The participants of this meeting place high priority on research to:

1. Understand the role of biodiversity in yielding goods and services, including potential new uses of biodiversity;
2. Identify the socio-economic factors that influence intensity of use of biotic resources;
3. Investigate whether rights to access and use provide incentives for sustainable use;
4. Investigate the economic and social value of goods and services provided by ecosystems including plausible scenarios of climate and social changes;
5. Establish methods and mechanisms to determine sustainability of various intensities of use, and to further develop participatory methods for determining appropriate levels of sustainable use;
6. Investigate ways of enhancing equitable distribution of benefits derived from the use of biodiversity;
7. Improve methods to measure and value biodiversity and system resilience, and to integrate these values in accounting systems and project appraisals.

The above research priorities stemmed in particular from the following considerations:

- Humans use goods and services provided by, or derived from, components of biodiversity (all levels of biodiversity included) to derive metabolic, economic, financial, social, cultural, political, structural, ecological, climatic, aesthetic, and spiritual benefit;
- Use is sustainable when current benefits can continue to be derived indefinitely into the future under most probable scenarios of climate, economic and social change;
- Unsustainable use of resources occurs when those exploiting them have or can see no alternative, when they are undervalued, when their stewards lack adequate knowledge about the management of the resource, when resource tenure and ownership structures are inappropriate, and when the benefit and costs associated with using the resources accrue to different actors;
- The benefits derived from the use of biodiversity are often inequitably distributed;

- Unless the livelihoods of local communities are assured, either within the capacity of local ecosystems or by some other means not depending on local ecosystems or the over-use of distant ecosystems, sustainable use will not be achieved;
- The use of components of biological diversity may encourage conservation², provided that the use is sustainable and resulting benefits are shared fairly and equitably;
- Ecotourism when properly managed (i.e. local participation in decision-making and equitable distribution of benefits) may contribute significantly to the local economy while encouraging local people to conserve biodiversity as a valuable resource base³;
- Good communication and co-operation between local, regional and national administrations, businesses and civil society is a crucial condition for sustainable use;
- Decisions intended to encourage sustainable use are often based on inadequate information;
- Since science cannot in many cases yet provide techniques to assess *a priori* whether use is sustainable, one of the most reliable methods for assessment is through scientific monitoring of the processes and components of biodiversity concerned;
- In case the threshold from sustainable to unsustainable use is not known, the precautionary principle should be applied.

¹ "Sustainable use" is normally, and in this agreement, used to refer to the use of free-living components of biodiversity, not domestic species managed for sustained harvesting.

² Sustainable use of the components of biological diversity is one of the three objectives of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).

³ see CBD, Decision V/25