



*EU Environmental Policy Briefing\**

**Conference on the European Biodiversity Action Plan and Post-2010 Visions**

20 February 2009

On 11 February a high-level roundtable conference was held at the European Parliament (EP) on ‘The European Biodiversity Action Plan – Counting down to 2010: State of Play and the post 2010 vision for Europe’. It was jointly organised by the European Parliament Intergroup on Sustainable Development, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Countdown 2010 initiative as well as the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD). The purpose of the roundtable was to inform the forthcoming Parliament debate on the mid-term review of the European Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). In addition, the conference wished to contribute to discussions on post-2010 measures for halting biodiversity loss, including the question of whether there should be a new biodiversity target and what that might be.

According to the organisers, more than 160 people attended the conference, including representatives from various European non-governmental organisations, the European Commission and academia. Unfortunately, although the EP hosted the roundtable, few of its Members participated in the event.

The roundtable was chaired by Struan Stevenson, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and chair of the EP Intergroup on Sustainable Development. He chose the occasion to relaunch the Intergroup under its new name of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Intergroup, with the intention of reflecting the increasing importance of both issues to sustainable development in Europe and abroad.

The conference consisted of two main parts, which addressed two key questions. These questions and the main outcomes of the discussions are summarised below.

***The BAP Review – Where Do We Stand with the 2010 Goal?***

The keynote speech by European Commissioner for the Environment Stavros Dimas picked up the most important results of the review. Despite progress in many areas the EU will fail to meet its target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. In particular, the integration of biodiversity in other sectoral policies remains a major challenge.

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According to Commissioner Dimas, the EU needs to focus on a number of key issues including increasing the scientific basis that underpins biodiversity policy, improving communication by sending clearer messages to stakeholders and the wider public, and aligning economics with biodiversity conservation.

The economics of ecosystems and biodiversity also played a major role in the speeches of Andreas Wijkman (MEP), Jacqueline McGlade (European Environmental Agency – EEA), John Hontelez (European Environmental Bureau – EEB) and Tony Long (WWF European Policy Office – WWF EPO). The move to a broader, greener, integrated economic model was a common message in the presentations. These referred to issues such as taking the true costs of biodiversity loss into account, valuing the benefits arising from ecosystem services, using ‘public money for public goods’, as well as calling for more fundamental changes in production and consumption patterns. However, emphasis was also given to the challenge of accurately measuring the ‘world’ in order to assess the consequences of action or inaction. Jacqueline McGlade highlighted the usefulness and importance of biodiversity indicators in providing an overall picture of what is happening to biodiversity, and as a fundamental basis for better valuing our natural capital.

#### ***The Way Forward – Critical Elements to 2010 and the Post-2010 Vision***

In the second part of the conference Pavan Sukhdev, study leader of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative stressed the need for the right metrics to value what matters for human well-being, including biodiversity. Paul Magnette, Belgian Federal Minister of the Environment, underlined Belgium’s commitment to the 2010 target in view of its Presidency in the second half of 2010, and additionally addressed the issue of invasive alien species (IAS). The session concluded with a roundtable chaired by Sebastian Winkler (Countdown 2010) comprising of Ladislav Miko (DG Environment), Alain Lipietz (MEP, France), David Baldock (IEEP), Zoltan Waliczky (RSPB, European Habitats Forum Chair), Denis Mertens (European Aggregates Association), and Alain-Dominique Quintart (Syngenta).

Regarding the Commission’s vision for post-2010, Ladislav Miko pointed out that he wishes to promote further ‘bottom up’ discussions of the target with stakeholders. Thus, the European Commission intends to launch a debate by publishing a Communication early this year, which will address some of the Commission’s key messages. He highlighted that the forthcoming conference in Athens hosted by Environment Commissioner Dimas (27-28 April 2009), will provide further opportunities for discussions on post-2010 targets and measures. He also underlined the necessity for collecting more and better data on biodiversity and actions to conserve it, so that progress towards the target and key actions taken by Member States can be better monitored.

One of the critical elements affecting the 2010 target and the post-2010 vision that was referred to by the roundtable was the necessity to get messages across to the general public and mobilise their support. In this regard, David Baldock emphasised the importance of creating a feeling of personal responsibility and of showing how biodiversity affects everyone’s life.

***References***

1. Intergroup on Sustainable Development, Press Release 19/02/2009: The 2010 Biodiversity Challenge: Will the EU reach it? What future after 2010?

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