



Press release - 30 June 2010

BIODIVERSITY STILL A WALK-ON ACTOR ON EU'S DEVELOPMENT AID SCENE

*Environmental NGOs urge European Union
to fulfil commitment to sustainable development aid*

BRUSSELS, 29 June 2010 – Today BirdLife International [1] and Conservation International (CI) – Europe [2] called on the European Union to recommit and step up efforts to integrate biodiversity in EU development aid.

The stakes could not be higher, as ecosystem degradation is having knock-on effects on human communities. In its 2010 report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the European Commission points out that the depletion of natural capital resulting from the unsustainable management of natural resources is in many ways undermining development efforts. A study into The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) has shown that by 2050, if biodiversity loss continues unchecked, the costs would amount to about 7% of global GDP, exacerbating inequality and instability in human societies.

As Jean-Philippe Palasi, Director for EU Policy at CI - Europe commented, *“While we applaud Europe’s contribution to official development assistance, which stands at 57 percent of the total, there is hollowness to that accolade. We need to break the mindset that all aid is good aid. It’s an oversimplification of the problem at the most fundamental level.”*

The two leading international conservation and environment organisations presented their vision at an event in the European Parliament, sponsored by Jo Leinen, MEP, Conservation International, BirdLife International and the Agence Française de Développement.

“We’ve gone seriously off track in terms of meeting global targets on biodiversity loss and development,” said Angelo Caserta, European Regional Director, BirdLife International. *“Getting back on the road will require close attention to how funds are being used to promote sustainable development. A lack of consideration for the environmental foundation of development can considerably reduce or even jeopardize the effectiveness of aid, whilst addressing it can increase it.”*

The position statement points out the gap between EU institution rhetoric and action, with little progress made in terms of specific budget allocations or mainstreaming practices at country level. In June 2009, the EU Council invited the Commission to prepare, *“an ambitious EU wide strategy for integration of environment in development cooperation, to be presented to the Council by late 2011.”* The NGOs have pledged their assistance, and are seeking action from European policymakers.

Jean-Philippe Palasi said *“We’re facing a double wakeup call on both the environment (loss of biodiversity) and development (back-sliding and missing the MDG targets). It is no longer sufficient to say the right words about the integration of biodiversity and development. The time for action is now.”*

Ten recommendations are put forward that would help integrate biodiversity into EU development cooperation. These include:

- Raising the profile and prominence of biodiversity conversation in the programming dialogue between partner countries/regions and the European Commission
- Increasing openness and transparency through publication and dissemination of information on development assistance, its impacts and the mainstreaming of environment
- Considering the impact of other EU policies on degradation of natural ecosystems outside the EU
- Adherence to Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) across all aid and development programs

The position *“Integrating Biodiversity in EU Development Cooperation”* is attached to this press release.

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Notes to editors

[1] *BirdLife International is a global Partnership of nature conservation organisations working in more than 100 countries and territories. BirdLife is the leading authority on the status of birds, their*

habitats and the problems affecting them, and is working on a wide range of environmental issues. BirdLife has 42 Partners in Europe, and is represented in all 27 Member States.

For more information about the work of the BirdLife European Division: <http://europe.birdlife.org>

[2] *Conservation International is an organisation with global reach and impact. Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, CI empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature for the well-being of humanity. CI works in more than 40 countries on four continents. Based in Brussels, CI Europe ASBL is the organisation's new office in charge of policy work at EU level.*

For more information, visit www.conservation.org

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