

We must strengthen resilience through 'ecological infrastructure'? - Policy Briefing

Title This is an extract from the BirdLife Policy Brief for CBD COP-10, Nagoya - message from BirdLife's Chairman Peter J. Schei Biodiversity provides ecosystem services that underpin our very existence and also contribute enormously to the economy both nationally and globally. The final synthesis report of the study on the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity (TEEB) will hopefully be a major wake-up call when it shows that the cost of inaction to address biodiversity loss will be a major loss to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), increased vulnerability to major shocks and disasters as well as the loss of other provisioning, regulating, cultural and aesthetic services that human beings have long taken for granted. During the CBD's 10th Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, I sincerely hope that this realisation will lead Governments towards the political will to adopt a post-2010 biodiversity strategy that is achievable and yet ambitious. The new plan, which should aim to stop biodiversity loss and champion the recovery of habitats and species, must focus on enhancing the resilience of ecosystems and peoples by envisioning a global 'ecological infrastructure' consisting of a representative network of conservation areas that is fully integrated into the wider land and sea scape. At the core of such a network must be priority sites that are of particular importance for biodiversity, such as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). It is only when such a comprehensive, representative and well-connected and effectively managed network is established that we will fully realise the cost-effective benefits from ecosystem services relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as disaster risk reduction. Further, relatively low-cost investments in 'ecological infrastructure' compared to other forms of investment have the potential to yield dividends in terms of livelihoods improvement and poverty reduction if done in the right way. BirdLife International through its Local Conservation Groups (LCG) approach has demonstrated several ways of sustainable use in which the outcomes are good for biodiversity and good for people. However, the BirdLife Partnership also realises that the interaction between poor people and biodiversity conservation is not always a win-win situation, and in these cases, trade-off methodologies will have to be developed to ensure that biodiversity loss does not occur. To transform this vision to reality requires resource investments that are several orders of magnitude higher than the current level. I am convinced that in addition to the traditional sources of biodiversity funding, payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes present a new and innovative way to mobilise the needed financial resources both at international and national levels. The

Norwegian Climate Facility and the Lifeweb Initiative that has been catalysed by the German Government are also good examples of innovative financing mechanisms.