Rio+20 - BirdLife urges governments to ensure that biodiversity and nature are central to decisions taken on sustainable development

Title

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 178 countries voted to adopt the Agenda 21 blueprint to rethink economic growth, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection. Twenty years later, the UN is again bringing together governments, international institutions and NGOs in an attempt to agree a range of measures to reduce poverty while promoting sustainable development across the world. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), better known as Rio+20, will take place in Brazil on 20-22 June 2012 after a week of preparatory meetings beginning 13 June. The first Rio Summit identified three mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental. Three key international treaties were also opened for signature at Rio in 1992 - the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. These have done much to shape international approaches to climate change and biodiversity loss. Since the first Rio meeting, nations have put in place some significant policies to slow biodiversity declines. Overall, however, these have been woefully inadequate, and the increasing pressures on biodiversity continue to outpace the responses. Efforts need to be greatly scaled up. BirdLife is calling on governments attending Rio+20 to demonstrate global leadership to redirect the global economy towards a sustainable pathway - see our letter. Among other qualities, a genuinely green economy must be centred on the principles of sustainable development as outlined in Agenda 21. It must be in harmony with nature, respect environmental limits, and recognise the crucial underpinning provided by biodiversity and ecosystem services, and thus the fundamental importance of nature conservation to economic prosperity and poverty eradication. It must use the effective solutions that nature offers to many global challenges, including water, food security and climate change. The underpinning role of nature and biodiversity needs to be clearly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals. This new initiative to be discussed in Rio could result in a set of quantitative, universally applied goals to measure country performance towards sustainable development, as part of an international

post 2015 framework for international development. BirdLife also urges a redirection of the ?perverse incentives? that act to undermine sustainable development, such as subsidies that indirectly stimulate overfishing, destructive agricultural practices and use of fossil fuels. The marine environment needs special attention, and BirdLife International supports calls for negotiation of an implementing agreement within the framework of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea that would address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including effective safeguards for ecologically or biologically significant areas. ?To ensure coherent progress towards sustainable development, priority cross-cutting issues identified in the Rio+20 outcomes, like forests and biodiversity, oceans, water, food security and agriculture, energy, require urgent action,? said Melanie Heath, Head of Policy. ?They must link and refer to the delivery of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, agreed at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets?. These targets are essential for the achievement of sustainable development and need to be firmly embedded in ambitious Rio+20 outcomes that are in harmony with nature and respect environmental limits. See IUCN Aichi Target analysis. Governments have spent many hours in preparatory meetings to try and agree on the Rio+20 outcome text. BirdLife is calling on governments to act quickly to agree and implement decisive actions that will achieve sustainable development, recognizing that biodiversity and ecosystem services are at the heart of a sustainable future for all - essential for our livelihoods, our cultures, and our well-being. Some 50,000 people, including governments, business executives, representatives of NGOs, youth groups and indigenous peoples, among many others, are expected to participate in both official and parallel events during the Conference. A delegation from BirdLife (including BirdLife Partners from Fiji, Kenya, Spain, Turkey, and the UK as well as the BirdLife Secretariat) is working to try to ensure that the needs and roles of biodiversity and nature are central to decisions taken on sustainable development. Links to: - The BirdLife International Partnership Letter to the World's Governments at RIO+20 - IUCN Aichi targets analysis - Rio+20 BirdLife policy briefing paper - BirdLife's spotlight on sustainability