Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

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The Commission presented a report on the 2010 assessment of the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan.

Context: the 2006 Communication Halting Biodiversity Loss by 2010 – and Beyond: Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being underlined the importance of biodiversity protection as a pre-requisite for sustainable development, and set out a detailed Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) to achieve this. It also included a commitment from the Commission to periodically report to the Council and the Parliament on the progress achieved in implementation.

The 2008 mid-term assessment of the BAP outlined the most important activities undertaken by the Commission and the Member States since 2006. It revealed that the EU was highly unlikely to meet its 2010 target of halting biodiversity decline.

Since 2008, biodiversity has remained high on the political agenda, at EU and global level. **2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity**. Biodiversity will be debated for the first time ever at Head of State and Government level in the United Nations General Assembly in September, prior to the 10th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD) in Nagoya, Japan, in October.

In January 2010, the European Commission adopted a Communication on Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010. This provided an assessment of achievements and shortcomings of the current policy. In its March 2010 conclusions, the Environment Council agreed a new long-term vision and mid-term headline target for biodiversity in the EU for the period beyond 2010. The new target commits the EU to "Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss". EU heads of state and government subsequently committed to the EU post-2010 vision and target for biodiversity at the 2010 Spring European Council.

Finally, the EU2020 Strategy endorsed by the European Council in June 2010 underscored the importance of achieving the biodiversity targets, in particular through the development of a resource efficiency initiative.

This 2010 BAP assessment highlights key actions taken since the mid-term assessment. The assessment summarises the current state of progress for each of the four main policy areas, the 10 objectives and the four supporting measures set out in the 2006 BAP.

Current situation: the EU 2010 Biodiversity Baseline published by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in June 2010 highlights that EU biodiversity is under serious pressure and faces grave risks. The focus of the Baseline is on the status of biodiversity as compared to measures undertaken, as inventoried in this Report. It is clear from the Baseline that **the target of halting the biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010 has been missed**. In addition, Europe's ecosystem services are judged to be of mixed status or degraded — i.e. no longer able to deliver the optimal quality and quantity of basic services such as crop pollination, clean air and water.

The global situation is even more alarming as pressures on biodiversity continue to intensify, as shown by the 3rd Global Biodiversity Outlook published in May 2010. The international community has failed to achieve the target under the UN CBD of significantly reducing biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010.

Europe holds a share of responsibility for this failure. Over the last 40 years, Europe's Ecological Footprint, which compares human demand with the planet's ecological capacity, increased by 33%.

While still insufficient, significant progress has been made over the last two years on:

- the further selection and more effective protection of Natura 2000 sites;
- improving the knowledge base;
- establishing further linkages between biodiversity and climate change and emphasising co-benefits as a result of integrated approaches.

The findings of this report also confirm the failures identified in the Commission Communication on Options for a post 2010 policy. More progress needs to be made on:

- the integration of biodiversity considerations into other **sectoral policies**;
- making available the necessary **funding**;
- **filling existing policy gaps**.

The Commission is working on the future EU biodiversity policy framework. The findings of this 2010 BAP assessment will provide valuable input to this work. Action and implementation continue to be needed at multiple levels: international, EU, national and sub-national.

The approach taken in the EU BAP to share responsibility for implementation between all sectors and establish partnerships with Member States remains fully relevant. What is also clear is that the shortcomings of BAP implementation to date and its failure to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target will need to be reflected upon, to ensure successful delivery of the 2020 target at EU and global levels.