Biodiversity, action plans: conservation of natural resources, agriculture, fishing and development

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The Council adopted conclusions encouraging biodiversity conservation. Recalling the objective of halting biodiversity loss by 2010, the Council reaffirmed that integration of environmental and, in particular, biodiversity considerations into Community sectoral policies and the promotion of sustainable development played a crucial role in the conservation and sustainable use of European biological diversity. Two dimensions should be taken into account to reverse the current trend: 1) With regard to the internal dimension (Natura 2000 network), the Council noted the many difficulties which had been encountered in implementing the different stages of the 'Habitats' Directive and encouraged all Member States and the Commission to resolve the outstanding difficulties: - to urgently finish the selection of Sites of Community Importance and adopt the lists of other bio-geographic regions; - to designate Special Protection Areas for birds, as an essential pillar of the network; - to encourage the participation of all stakeholders in the future development of Natura 2000, paying special attention to the rural community; - to adopt measures aimed at raising public awareness of the purposes and aims of the Natura 2000 network and increasing public debate on this issue; - to carry out studies addressing the economic valuation and benefits of biodiversity and, in particular, the Natura 2000 network to encourage both private sector involvement in biodiversity conservation and positive debate on the role of Natura 2000 as an instrument for sustainable development; - to apply the results of scientific research in order to keep under review and, when necessary, adapt the Annexes to the 'Habitats' and 'Birds' Directives; - to implement, as soon as possible, the provisions of the Directive concerning the management of the network and to address the issue of financing, including an appropriate framework for Community cofinancing; - presentation by the Commission of options for an adequate and effective Community financing framework as an input into the future Community financial perspectives; - development of further guidance and common criteria for the application of compensatory measures which should be included as part of any plan or project having a significant adverse effect on a Natura 2000 site; - establishment of effective instruments at the appropriate administrative level to provide for protection of sites and allow for the adoption and full implementation of appropriate management measures; - establishment of an appropriate monitoring process, based on existing or planned mechanisms, to ensure that the management of sites was achieving the conservation objectives set by the Directive. 2) At international level, the Council welcomed the outcome of the 6th Conference of the Parties to the CDB and emphasised that the Convention on Biological Diversity was the principal international legal instrument for the coordination, consolidation and strengthening of efforts undertaken through the various regional, sub-regional and international biodiversity-related agreements and programmes. The Council stressed the importance of moving forward the agreements reached in The Hague, in particular by committing to the effective implementation of: - the Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity; - the Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilisation; - the Guiding Principles for the Implementation of Article 8(h) on Invasive Alien Species; - the Strategic Plan for the Convention. The Commission and Member States were urged to incorporate the relevant aspects of the Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity, the Bonn Guidelines and the Guiding Principles on Invasive Alien Species, as well as other relevant decisions of CoP 6, when implementing their respective policies, programmes, strategies and action plans.