Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

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The Council adopted its conclusions on biodiversity. It welcomed the Commission Communication entitled “Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and Beyond: sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being,” which defined key policy areas and set out priority objectives for 2007-2013. It supported the ten priority objectives contained in the Communication and endorsed the general approach of strengthening integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into relevant horizontal and sectoral policies. The Council emphasised the importance of strengthened cooperation and coordination between the Commission and the Member States in the further refinement and implementation of the EU Action Plan and called on the Commission further to develop appropriate processes and effective structures for this purpose, and to start a process, involving stakeholders, for the development of a long-term EU vision for biodiversity, as a frame for further policy development.

Regarding biodiversity in the EU, the Commission and the Member Startes are invited to:

- finalize the Natura 2000 network both on land and at sea, and to ensure effective management and adequate financing of the network;

- initiate a scientific review of species, and of habitats as a second step, listed in the annexes of the Habitats Directive, building, inter alia, on the analysis of the Member States' reports under the Habitats Directive and in the light of progress made by 2010;

- strengthen the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services considerations and targets into policies and programmes in all relevant sectors;

- use the opportunities provided for in agricultural, rural development, forest and fisheries policies to support the biodiversity target, both within protected areas and in the wider countryside and marine environment;

- reduce pollution and nutrient load from agricultural and other diffuse sources as well as from urban, industrial and other point sources;

- pursue efforts to implement the EU Forest Action Plan;

- reinforce the compatibility of regional and territorial development with biodiversity objectives;

- ensure the adequate treatment of biodiversity concerns in Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments;

- assess gaps in the current legal, policy and economic framework for the prevention of introduction and for the control and eradication of invasive alien species;

- prepare an EU strategy and an effective early warning system, taking into account biogeographic regions;

- fully implement the EU legislative framework on Genetically Modified Organisms, notably its provisions for environmental risk assessment, monitoring plans and identification systems.

The Council also strongly supported the strengthening of international governance for biodiversity and reiterated the need for mutual supportiveness between Multilateral Environmental Agreements and

enhanced cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and processes as well as the need for strengthening synergies and, as appropriate, consistency between them at all levels. The Commission and Member States were encouraged to:

- implement fully the CBD Bonn Guidelines and other ABS-related agreements, and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the MOP 3 decision on documentation requirements for transboundary movements of GMOs;

- support the partner countries and regions to integrate biodiversity in their development strategies, and enhance funding for biodiversity considerations in external assistance programmes;

- identify the major impacts of trade on biodiversity and to adopt appropriate measures to prevent or mitigate negative impacts, as well as to encourage positive trade practices;

- promote integration of biodiversity in the WTO Doha negotiations, and to enhance mutual supportiveness between multilateral trade agreements and biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as well as bilateral and regional agreements;

- explore options for further ensuring that imports of wild fauna and flora, including wild birds, to the EU are fully supportive of biodiversity objectives and do not pose a risk for their survival in the wild.

The Council stressed the importance of strengthening the resilience of EU biodiversity to climate change and invited the Commission to develop with the Member States a comprehensive programme of priority actions, taking into account long-term cost effectiveness, to support biodiversity adaptation to climate change in the EU.

The Commission was invited to submit to the Council and the Parliament mid-term and final reports on progress towards the targets of the Communication and the Action Plan.