



THE MESSAGE FROM PARIS

Integrating biodiversity into European development cooperation

From the participants of the Conference on Biodiversity in European Development Cooperation Paris, 19-21 September 2006

From Commitments to Action

From 19-21 September, 2006, over 400 participants from governments and civil society gathered in Paris to consider how to better integrate biodiversity into EU development cooperation.

Participants expressed concern that the goods and services provided by ecosystems are in decline, putting at risk sustainable development and the livelihoods of the poor. The need to forge stronger links between biodiversity and sustainable development has been recognised by the international community, including the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity who noted the biodiversity target was to be achieved as a “contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth”.

The European Union provides over half the world’s development funds and has made considerable efforts to support action for biodiversity by proposing integration of this issue into different sectors. The most recent indication of the European Commission’s commitment to improving integration of biodiversity into European development cooperation can be found in “Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and Beyond”. In 2006, both OECD Development and Environment Ministers and European Union institutions highlighted that they will support the efforts undertaken by partner countries to incorporate environmental considerations into development and PRSPs. While the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 seeks to better integrate the environment in development at sector and national levels, mainstreaming of environmental concerns into development policies and trade has yet to be achieved.

Participants identified the following set of challenges and activities for common action on integrating biodiversity into EU development cooperation.

Challenge 1 – Supporting Mainstreaming in Partner Countries

EU development cooperation with partner countries plays a central role in delivering the goals of development and sustaining the environment. Efforts to improve the integration of environment and development should aim at strengthening policies and institutions that support rural poverty reduction.

Participants encourage the European Commission and Member States to support their partner countries to:

- Promote sustainable rural development using biodiversity as an asset for rural poverty reduction, thus minimising risk, improving food security, nutrition and health;
- Develop and support the use of innovative financial mechanisms for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and poverty reduction;
- Strengthen civil society, in particular local communities and indigenous peoples, in order to build the domestic constituency for the integration of environment and development;
- Integrate environmental issues in national planning strategies for poverty reduction and macroeconomic policy instruments (PRSPs), and monitor progress in turning policy into action.

Challenge 2 – Governance

Equitable, transparent and effective governance systems are essential for both poverty reduction and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Governments alone cannot and should not set the governance framework. Governance operates at many levels from the international to the local. It is particularly important to empower poor people, local communities and indigenous peoples to have control over natural resources and environmental assets.

Participants encourage the European Commission and Member States to:

- Incorporate effective measures in Country Strategy Papers and sector policies to strengthen policies and institutions that support the formal recognition of rural and indigenous peoples' rights to manage natural resources and benefit from them;
- Systematically seek inputs and opinions from civil society, in particular the poor and indigenous peoples, as well as government viewpoints, in setting country-level priorities for aid programmes.

Challenge 3 - Instruments and Policy Coherence

Success in supporting sustainable development in developing countries will have direct positive impacts on key European domestic issues such as migration and security. Therefore, the EU needs to work for greater policy coherence in these areas.

Participants encourage the European Commission and Member States to:

- Make full use of the opportunities presented by instruments such as budget support, SWAPs, etc, to advance the mainstreaming of environmental concerns in development, including through high level policy dialogue;
- Support the systematic use of strategic environmental assessments in support of mainstreaming
- Improve coherence between EU policies and economic partnership agreements in relation to environment and development, trade, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, transport, and infrastructure;
- Provide leadership and means to support partner countries in creating a level playing field where sustainable business can be an effective partner in delivering conservation and development;
- Support knowledge development and participatory research;
- Act on the demand-side, especially by means of legislation, to reduce the ecological footprint of trade and European consumption on the world's forests and ocean resources;
- At international level, work with partner countries to reform global governance as well as strengthening UNEP, MEAs, and their enforcement mechanisms.

Challenge 4 – Recognition of biodiversity in Overseas Countries and Territories

The EU should develop a coherent framework for environment in OCTs to promote sustainable management of their important biodiversity areas, and also encourage joint efforts with Outermost Regions including adequate funding mechanisms.

The Way Forward

Participants stressed the need to incorporate the 2010 biodiversity target into the MDG framework in order to promote mainstreaming of biodiversity in development cooperation. They also welcomed the commitment by the EU Finnish Presidency to submit the Message from Paris to the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council in December 2006.

Participants encouraged the European Council and Parliament to discuss and take a position on the Communication entitled "Halting the loss of biodiversity in 2010 - and beyond". In conclusion, they expressed their gratitude to the sponsors and the host country for organising the Paris Conference, thus creating the space for dialogue between the environmental and development communities from North and South.