



Fourth Biodiversity in Europe Conference **Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia** **22-24 February 2006**

Conclusions of the Chairman, H.E. Mr. Božo Biškupić, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, on the Pan-European regional meeting in preparation for the Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

Introduction

In its Decision V/20, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognized that activities at the sub-regional and regional levels, including existing regional processes established for other biological-diversity-related purposes, have an important role to play in preparing for the Convention meetings and enhancing implementation of the Convention, and calls on Parties to participate actively in suitable sub-regional and regional activities, as well as on the Executive Secretary, subject to necessary voluntary contributions, to facilitate the involvement in such sub-regional and regional activities of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States, and other Parties with economies in transition.

1. In this context, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), in its role as an instrument for regional implementation of the CBD in the pan-European region, provides a forum to prepare for the Meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This preparation takes place through the *Biodiversity in Europe* Conferences. On the occasion of the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Government of the Republic of Croatia hosted the Fourth *Biodiversity in Europe* Conference at Plitvice Lakes National Park from 22 February to 24 February 2006. Close to 200 participants from the pan-European region attended the Conference on behalf of Governments; international and regional governmental organizations; and international, regional and national non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The Croatia Conference was chaired by H.E. Mr. Božo Biškupić, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. After H.E. Mr. Biškupić's welcoming speech, and the keynote address by H.E. Mr. Aleksandar Popović, Minister of Science and Environmental Protection, Republic of Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro, H.E. Dr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, opened the Conference. The following speakers also gave keynote addresses at the Conference: Mr. Wolfgang Stalzer, Director General, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria, representing the EU presidency; Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Mr. Ladislav Miko, Director, *Protecting the Natural Environment*, Directorate General – Environment, European Commission; Dr. Jeffrey McNeely, Chief Scientist, IUCN-the World Conservation Union; Ms. Ana Liro, Deputy Director, Department of Nature Protection, on behalf of Prof. Jan Szyszko, Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Poland; Mr. Bulat Yessekin, Executive Director, Regional Environment Centre-Central Asia; Ms Marie Belling, Project Manager, on behalf of Thierry de l'Escaille, Secretary General and CEO, European Landowners Organization; and Mr. Alex Kirby, journalist.
2. The Organisation of the Conference benefited from the financial support and close collaboration of the following pan-European Governments: Croatia, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, the Netherlands, Austria and Moldova; intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations: UNEP, the Council of Europe, ECNC and IUCN as well as the private sector: British Petroleum, Hrvatski Telekom and the Croatian Tourist Board.
3. The Governments participating in the PEBLDS process considered the following issues from the agenda of CBD-COP 8 to highlight and discuss at the Croatia Conference: Island Biodiversity; the Global Taxonomy Initiative; and Communication, Education and Public Awareness. The Conference also considered the

following CBD COP-8 issues in the context of progress made in the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity: Implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity; Monitoring Progress and Reporting Progress: Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI2010); Forests and Biodiversity; Agriculture and Biodiversity; Protected Areas and Ecological Networks; and Invasive Alien Species. The objective of the Conference was to reach a common understanding on these issues and develop recommendations for submission to the CBD COP-8. The Governments of the Republic of Croatia, Czech Republic, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy, Russian Federation, Germany, Austria, Norway, Poland, Moldova, and the United Kingdom with support from the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, the Joint Research Centre-Ispira, the PEBLDS Joint Secretariat, the MCPFE Liaison Unit-Warsaw, the Council of Europe, the European Centre for Nature Conservation, IUCN-World Conservation Union, WWF- Russia, and the Countdown 2010 Secretariat, prepared the background discussion papers on the above priority issues.

4. The Conference welcomed the clear progress with implementing a number of Kyiv targets, in particular the targets on the Pan-European Ecological Network, on Monitoring and Indicators, and on Biodiversity Financing. It also welcomed the important role of the Countdown 2010 Initiative as a vehicle to communicate and support implementation of the 2010 target.
5. The Conference underlined the urgent need for the biodiversity sector to enter into practical and positive partnerships with land use, financial and economic sectors. It recognised the promising progress made with this respect in the cooperation with the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests and the European banks.
6. The Conference took note with pleasure of the results of the European Nature Conference in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands (September 2005), which brought together 650 persons from all over Europe, who sent a clear message to the pan-European process, and the conference endorsed the plea for connecting nature with nature, people with nature, and policy with practise.
7. Finally, the Chairman requested the countries and other stakeholders involved to take up and implement these recommendations and conclusions.

I. The Conference considered the following issues from the agenda of CBD COP8:

1. Island Biodiversity

- 1.1 The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in small islands are of pan-European importance and should thus receive due priority in pan-European cooperation. The biodiversity value of small islands should be considered as important in all relevant CBD programmes of work.
- 1.2 Efforts should be made at the continental level to develop a list of priority pan-European islands to be included in a network of, for example, Biosphere Reserves, or any other system of international protection.
- 1.3 To that effect, the following criteria should be taken into consideration for identification of these priority pan-European islands:
 - Presence of biodiversity of pan-European importance;
 - Possessing cultural and natural heritage;
 - Existence of traditional socio-economic activities;
 - Subject to high risk of irreversible damages to natural and cultural heritage in the near future.
- 1.4 Within any network system to be developed, co-operation should be promoted between islands.
- 1.5 There is a need for sharing of experiences between countries on conservation and sustainable use of island biodiversity.

2. Global taxonomy initiative

- 2.1 To improve the effectiveness of the implementation of the GTI programme of work;
- 2.2 To establish national focal points for the GTI in all countries, as repeatedly recommended by SBSTTA and facilitated, for example, by the European GTI Toolkit;
- 2.3 To promote cooperation at regional level in support of capacity-building activities, in accordance with Articles 15 and 18 of the Convention, making information available through the CBD Clearing House Mechanism, as already recommended by SBSTTA 10;
- 2.4 To request the Global Environment Facility to further support initiatives of taxonomic capacity-building for developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States, and other Parties with economies in transition, including the projects of the network of National Focal Points for the GTI and the maintenance of taxonomic collections;
- 2.5 To adopt as a target the production of an authoritative, widely accessible working list of known taxa names (under operational objective 2 of the GTI programme of work), to support the implementation of an effective system of registration of names for newly described taxa as well as to link the register of these with a web inventory including the accepted synonymies of existing scientific names; to recommend the adoption of this database as a reference list to validate the names included in biodiversity data banks which are being assembled at regional and national levels.

3. Communication, education and public awareness

- 3.1 The adoption of the recommendations as proposed by the Executive Secretary in the UNEP/CBD/COP/8/14 paper.
- 3.2 In addition the following paragraphs were considered:
 - *Invites* the Executive Secretary to use the IUCN Countdown 2010 Initiative as a vehicle for communication and supporting the implementation on the 2010 target.
 - *Invites* the Executive Secretary to follow up the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014 within the issue of biodiversity, in close co-operation with UNESCO, IUCN and regional bodies like the UNECE, PEBLDS and IGOs dealing with formal and informal education.
 - *Requests* the Executive Secretary to organise, as soon as possible, regional CBD workshops on CEPA, in close co-operation with IUCN and other organisations, choosing themes specifically relevant to the separate regions.
 - *Invites* the Executive Secretary to further develop the CEPA Informal Advisory Committee in close co-operation with media and journalists, in order to professionalize the CBD CEPA work, globally, regionally and nationally.
- 3.3 Increase the communication, education, public awareness and media activities to support the practical implications of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity.

Participating NGOs made the following additional suggestions:

Invites Parties to include the following points into the list of priority actions:

- Promote communication and collaboration among educational and cultural institutions, the business sector and other relevant stakeholders;
- Develop key messages on the holistic nature of environmental, social and economic issues;
- Implement a media relations strategy that builds the capacity of journalists and editors on biodiversity issues, and encourages the production and publication of media programmes on local natural assets.

Invites Parties to include the following educational activities at the national and regional level:

- Introduce integrated knowledge systems in education, from kindergarten to university;
- Base the education system on empirical studies, as much as appropriate;
- Develop the content and methodology of an education system based on a holistic approach; and
- Draw attention to the values of local natural surroundings and traditional knowledge through local media, exhibitions and other tools.

II. The Conference also considered the following CBD COP8 issues in the context of progress made in the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity:

1. Implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity

- 1.1 It is clear that achieving the 2010 biodiversity target in pan-Europe requires not only a redoubling of efforts in implementing the objectives of Kyiv and the CBD, but more specifically, a firm commitment for the Parties to act. In particular, regional co-operation and communication is vital if the 2010 goal is to be met. In particular regional cooperation, integration of biodiversity targets under other (sectoral) policies and programmes, communication and active involvement of all stakeholders is vital if the 2010 goal is to be met.
- 1.2 Through an approach centred on regional coordination, the countries of the pan-European region have made excellent progress in relation to some of the Kyiv targets. In particular:
 - The Pan-European Ecological Network for all 51 European countries has been addressed with interest and good results in many countries;
 - A successful European Biodiversity Investment Initiative has been initiated, attracting the attention of various banks;
 - The development of biodiversity indicators has progressed well;
 - Various successful communication initiatives have been launched and are being implemented, including Countdown 2010 and communication projects on the ground;
 - And with regards to the implementation of the activities under the Framework for Cooperation between the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/PEBLDS.
- 1.3 In these areas, pan-Europe could share experience with other regions in order to contribute towards the global 2010 goal.
- 1.4 With regard to progress made to achieve some of the other targets, especially invasive alien species and agriculture, an assessment of current frameworks and practices, implementation, and monitoring lies ahead. Additional research, monitoring, and reporting is also needed, and should be a priority for the PEBLDS.

2. Monitoring progress and reporting progress; streamlining European 2010 biodiversity indicators

- 2.1 SEBI2010 is a pan-European process that requires involvement from all parts of pan-Europe. In addition, support is needed to expand the indicators to include data from the entire pan-European region and in particular from the EECCA countries.
- 2.2 Additional scientific and policy support expertise needs to be brought in to continue work on indicators as well as sharing of experiences between all countries in the pan-European region.

- 2.3 A set of specific pan-European indicators should be completed by the end of 2006 to be used in assessing the 2010 target. This streamlined set of indicators should be policy relevant, user-friendly and resonant with the public.
- 2.4 It is necessary to make as soon as possible accurate estimates of the cost of producing each of the indicators to secure the funding needed for their development.
- 2.5 Given the development of a global project on biodiversity indicators to address CBD COP decisions to reach the 2010 target, to be led by UNEP-WCMC with financial support from the Global Environment Facility, the lessons learned from the work under SEBI2010 as a regional process could be of benefit to the global activities.

3. Agriculture and biodiversity

- 3.1 The economic viability of HNV farming systems is a key element in maintaining HNV farmland. Farm income policy and rural development policy both play an important role in supporting the economic viability of HNV farmland areas, and can be combined more effectively. It is advisable to target rural development measures to support high nature value farmland areas. Both ecological and socio-economic considerations should be taken into account when setting spatial priorities.
- 3.2 With regard to the Kyiv target on Agriculture and Biodiversity, further efforts are needed to gain insight into the distribution, conservation status and main trends of high nature value farmland, particularly in the EECCA countries. A monitoring scheme covering a representative sample of high nature value farmland in the pan-European region is needed. Ideally, the ecological data for these regions should be supplemented with socio-economic analyses to assess the viability of the farming systems involved.
- 3.3 It is planned to have an in-depth review of the Programme of Work on agricultural biodiversity at CBD COP-9 and one of the preceding two SBSTTAs. 'Wildlife' is explicitly included under 'the scope of agricultural biodiversity' in the appendix of the revised Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity (decision V/5), but so far little attention has been given to this 'dimension' of agricultural biodiversity. It is therefore recommended to propose to CBD COP-8 to implement the current programme of work in its full scope, including the conservation of wildlife and pay due attention to this aspect in the in-depth review of the programme of work at COP-9.

4. Forests and Biodiversity

- 4.1 The framework of Cooperation between the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/PEBLDS is a good example of inter-sectoral cooperation. Other regions should be encouraged to engage in similar processes at both the regional and national level, and they could also benefit from an exchange of experience with the pan-European region.
- 4.2 The Joint MCPFE/PEBLDS position on the pan-European understanding of the linkages between the sustainable forest management and ecosystem approach as adopted by the PEBLDS Council on the 22 February 2006 and by the MCPFE ELM on the 5-6 September 2005, is recommended to be submitted as a contribution to the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- 4.3 Take note of the pan-European experiences and achievements, developed by the MCPFE and PEBLDS, on the understanding of the linkages between sustainable forest management and the ecosystem approach.
- 4.4 Cross-sectoral cooperation was a main focus of the MCPFE workshop "Forests - Common Benefits, Shared Responsibilities, Multiple Policies" held in Riga, Latvia, October 17-19, 2005. The outcome of the workshop can contribute to the development of toolkits on cross-sectoral integrated approaches to

reduce the negative impacts and enhance the positive impacts of other sectoral policies on forest biological diversity.

- 4.5 With regards to forest law enforcement, governance and related trade, the MCPFE report on “Combating illegal harvesting and related trade in Europe” can be a contribution to the work of the CBD on these issues. Furthermore, the outcome of the MCPFE/PEBLDS workshop on “Combating illegal harvesting of forest products and related trade in Europe”, held in Madrid, December 2005, could also contribute to this end.

5. Protected Areas and Ecological Networks

- 5.1 Re-emphasize the crucial importance of implementing the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas for the achievement of the 2010 target, the well-being of the communities, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; and in particular reinforce the agreed target of establishing - by 2010 for terrestrial and by 2012 for marine areas - a global network of comprehensive, ecologically representative and effectively managed national and regional protected area systems.
- 5.2 Emphasize the need to reinforce global efforts to meet the targets of the programme of work.
- 5.3 Reiterate the need to integrate protected areas and protected areas systems into the wider land and seascape, and relevant sectors, by applying the ecosystem approach and taking into account ecological connectivity and the concept, where appropriate, of ecological networks.
- 5.4 Welcome the outcomes of the First Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas (WGPA I) and recognize the importance of further discussions.
- 5.5 Strongly support further work of WGPA after COP-8.
- 5.6 Emphasize the need for a clear and efficient review process in order to monitor implementation of the programme of work including the identification of obstacles, gaps and possible responses.
- 5.7 Reiterate the need for continuous improvement and the active dissemination of the tool-kit in cooperation with relevant partners (especially IUCN).
- 5.8 Stress the crucial relevance of the “ongoing dialogue” on financing initiated in Montecatini and offer support to its progress.

Specifically for Marine Areas:

- 5.9 Stress the importance of addressing the under-representation of marine and coastal protected areas *inter alia* by developing scientific criteria for their selection and supporting scientific research, and fully implement the relevant institutional and legislative tools.
- 5.10 Take note of the present discussions on the integrated governance of the high seas for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.
- 5.11 Reiterate the important role and responsibility of the CBD in the elaboration of the basis and concepts aimed at the establishment and maintenance of marine protected areas through, for example, provision of scientific and other relevant information.
- 5.12 Support enhanced coordination and co-operation between CBD and different fora dealing with marine areas at the national, regional and global level.

6. Invasive Alien Species

- 6.1 Invasive alien species are a major and growing threat to pan-European biodiversity, and underlines how, for meeting the 2010 target, it is critical to develop more stringent measures, both at the national and pan-European level, to prevent invasions and mitigate the impacts caused by biological invasions in pan-Europe.
- 6.2 The COP-8 should include a formal welcome to the adoption by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention at its 23rd meeting of December 2003 of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species, and to the commitment formalised in the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity, that by 2008 the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species will be implemented by at least half of the countries of the pan-European region through their respective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.
- 6.3 Welcome recommendation XI/12 of the SBSTTA, which indeed represents a comprehensive vision of the key aspects to be addressed by a policy on invasive alien species.
- 6.4 Implementation of recommendation XI/12 will require comprehensive and consistent policies at the regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national levels. In this regard, COP-8 should call on Parties to develop consistent national policies on invasive alien species, when adequate through the adoption of national action plans or strategies on this issue.
- 6.5 In the preparation of national action plans/strategies it is important to involve all relevant societal sectors, including NGOs, universities, and the private sector.
- 6.6 Authorities at the pan-European level should identify constraints and gaps in their legal and policy frameworks, and address them through a revision of their policies.
- 6.7 Competent pan-European regional authorities should follow up the implementation of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species by the pan-European States.
- 6.8 Examples of best practices and successful management actions on invasive alien species and flag projects on invasive alien species shall be promoted and circulated.
- 6.9 Pan-European States should prevent invasions or mitigate impacts caused by invasive alien species of trees, with particular reference to the sinks related provisions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol.
- 6.10 Use of alien biocontrol agents should be regulated and managed on the basis of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Code of Conduct for the Import and Release of Exotic Biological Control Agents and relevant European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) standards.

7. Biodiversity and Financing

Taking into account relevant CBD decisions on financing biodiversity, it is necessary to catalyse public and private financing for achieving the commitments of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity. The Conference took note of the recommendations (Annex) of the Contact Group that was established by the PEBLDS Council to explore ways and means to improve financing on biodiversity, including innovative financing mechanisms.

Recommendations from the contact group regarding financing of biodiversity

Composition of the Contact Group:

Representative for Croatia
Representative for France
Representative for Switzerland
Representative for ECNC
Representative for IUCN

The contact group recommends prioritising the development of breakthrough finance approaches and related activities for assisting the implementation of the Kyiv biodiversity targets and enhancing the understanding of economic and financial values of biodiversity, with special attention to:

- Implementing effective fundraising approaches that appeal to the interest of potential public and private donors;
- Examining the possibilities of establishing 2010 biodiversity target action funds at national and regional levels, including by re-pooling existing funds;
- Examining the possibilities of utilising existing bilateral public funds and the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument also for the purpose of achieving the 2010 biodiversity target;
- Developing action-oriented partnerships with the private sector to support the implementation of the 2010 biodiversity target, in particular via biodiversity (-relevant) investment funds provided by national, pan-European and international financial institutions, and via pilot schemes with private enterprises and good cause lotteries; and
- Providing comprehensive training and information facilities to stakeholders in EECCA countries in order to increase skills for enhancing the scope and success rate of funding applications and to increase understanding of economic and financial values of biodiversity.

The Contact group recommends that the PEBLDS Joint Secretariat, the Countdown 2010 partnership and the European Task Force for Banking, Business and Biodiversity assist, in a joint effort, interested pan-European governments and other stakeholders in the implementation of the above-mentioned priority activities, and report progress to the next PEBLDS meeting.