



Mr. Janez Potočnik
Commissioner for the Environment
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels

Brussels, 10 March 2010

Post-2010 Biodiversity Agenda

Dear Commissioner Potočnik,

We welcome the Commission Communication on Biodiversity published on 19th January 2010 and calls for urgent action at EU level and inter-governmental level to halt the loss of biodiversity, recognizing that human well-being depends on biodiversity.¹ We support the Commission's analysis that efforts to date to stop biodiversity loss at the global and European level have not been sufficient. The target to halt biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010 has not been reached, as biodiversity keeps being lost at an unacceptable rate and serious ecological, economic and social consequences are now apparent.

We believe that it is essential for the Spring EU Council, on 26 March, to adopt a new EU vision for biodiversity and a robust target for 2020 and bring forward a European Action Plan, before the end of 2010, with proposals on mechanisms and instruments to achieve the 2020 target.

We support the adoption of a headline target to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as possible and stepping up the European Union contribution to averting global biodiversity loss (option 4 in the Communication).

We agree with the proposition put forward by the European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA) which advocates "the use of the International Year of Biodiversity effectively as a platform to ensure conservation of biodiversity (on land and in the sea) is given the highest priority across all relevant EU policies"².

The 2020 headline target should be fully taken into consideration in main EU cross-cutting strategies, such as the Sustainable Development Strategy and the "EU 2020" Strategy in order to maximise coherence and mutual supportiveness.

¹ This letter represents the views of the EEAC chair, and its Working Group Biodiversity's co-chairs, as informed by discussions within the network, but not necessarily reflect the views of individual councils.

² ENCA letter to President Barroso, 10th February 2010

The efforts for mainstreaming biodiversity in sectoral policies need to be significantly increased. We support prioritising the development of the 7th Environmental Action Programme as the framework for future environmental policy approaches, for tackling the intra-environment conflicts and showing ways for better environmental integration, incl. biodiversity.

It would be useful for the member states, if the EU prepared guidelines on means for horizontal co-operation across government. The new EU Vision and Action Plan for Biodiversity also needs to address the means for improving communication, awareness raising and capacity building across all sectors.

The EEA should finalise the first EU biodiversity baseline assessment in 2010, and launch the Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE), and commence a review of the SEBI 2010 in the light of the new EU 2020 target.

The economic valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services should be integrated into conventional accounting procedures such as the System of Standard National Accounts – having regard to the EEA work on developing ecosystem accounts.

The multi-stakeholder and intergovernmental process under the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) should conclude deliberations and establish in 2010 an efficient and independent mechanism focused on governments' needs so that the best available knowledge on biodiversity and eco-systems is used to inform decision-making on all relevant policies and economic activities.

While the EU must have regard to the differentiated competencies, as regards the governance dimension, it is necessary to create the conditions that allow all those who directly participate in land-use management, and in particular the local communities, to take concrete conservation initiatives, so that all interested stakeholders can participate in decision-making in an effective manner. In this way, action for biodiversity will be “bottom-up”, coming from the ground and showing the economic opportunities that arise from conservation.

The Action Plan to support the new target also needs to further address the role of the EU in global biodiversity conservation in particular the coherence between biodiversity and resource use policies such as the Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan and the Raw Materials Initiative and recognise the need to increase resource efficiency.

We welcome the acknowledgement of the crucial contribution of “Green Infrastructure”. These should be specified to be areas preventing habitat fragmentation and underpinning ecological connectivity, as well as supporting climate adaptation and mitigation objectives. Ecological networks, as outlined in Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and Article 3 of the Birds Directive, need to be further developed. Indeed they should be part of a European spatial development perspective, which should be considered as a complement to national, regional and local spatial planning approaches. National Governments should be encouraged to develop strategies for green infrastructure and ecological connectivity, and integrate these with policies on landscape and spatial planning. The definition of Green Infrastructure (in footnote 14 of the Commission Communication of 19th January) could be looked at again to underline the functionalities of different areas for biodiversity and to incorporate multi-functionality and the provision of ecosystem goods and services.

In 2009, the EEAC issued a statement on sustainable infrastructure for Europe, including green infrastructure. This statement identified the need to:

- Establish baseline situation – Member States to identify current assets, functional requirements, benefits & challenges,
- Develop the means – build on existing networks and policy approaches including WFD and ICZM,
- Further develop the policy options – EU Strategic Vision, guidance and standards for MS, sector specific instruments, IA,
- Address conflicts through improved planning and SEA processes including full impact assessment of transport infrastructure for projects funded by EU & EIB - environmental values must carry more weight in these assessments,
- Enhance funding opportunities – Life+, Structural and Cohesion Fund, Rural Development as well as Green New Deal stimulus type packages can present opportunities to support Green Infrastructure.

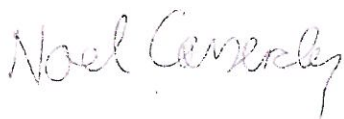
EEAC is continuing its work on Green Infrastructure, also with its annual conference in October 2010 on Sustainable Land Use.

We are looking forward to continued fruitful exchange with DG Environment in these matters.

Yours sincerely

By order


Hubert David
Chairman of the EEAC Steering Committee



Noel Casserly
Comhar, Sustainable Development Council of Ireland



Jan Verheeke
SAR Minaraad Strategic Advisory Council
Environment and Nature Council of Flanders

co-chairs, EEAC Working Group Biodiversity