



“Cibeles” Priorities

- Halting the loss of biodiversity in Europe -

Spanish Presidency of the European Union Conference

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The role of Protected Areas and Ecological Networks in Europe”

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The “Cibeles priorities”¹: Stopping biodiversity loss in Europe

Biodiversity is essential to keep the conditions that allow human presence on Earth, both directly - through food - and indirectly, through the services it provides, such as the conservation of the water cycle, the maintenance of water and air quality, climate regulation or the production of medicines. All citizens are entitled to enjoy a healthy and sustainable environment, which requires the protection of biodiversity.

Biodiversity is also essential to reach the Millennium Development Goals. The Gross National Product of the poor is based on the primary exploitation of biodiversidad, while that of the rich is mostly based on the added value of industrial processes that use biodiversity, as well as on the goods and services it provides. In an inter-related world where economy and ecology are closely related, Europe also relies on nature’s goods and services.

However, efforts to date to stop biodiversity loss at the global and European level have not been sufficient. The target to “*Stop Biodiversity Loss in Europe by 2010*” has not been reached, as biodiversity keeps being lost at an unacceptable rate and its serious ecological, economic and social consequences are now predictable. The six main reasons why only 17% of species and habitats of conservation interest in Europe are in favourable conservation status are: the incomplete implementation of certain legal instruments; the lack of additional instruments to tackle specific problems; long-standing information gaps and insufficient scientific knowledge; poor integration in sectoral policies; funding needs; and the unbalance between those working for biodiversity conservation and those that benefit from it. That is to say: the means have not matched the targets and therefore rapid and efficient action is needed on all the above mentioned aspects in order to avoid going beyond the limits of nature.

Europe has the obligation to take urgent measures to preserve its own biodiversity, which very often is also of global importance. Europe has also the responsibility to show that high levels of economic development and social welfare are compatible with, and can even contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

We must share a common long-term vision that could be set for 2050, when Europe would have reached sustainable development. This requires that biodiversity and the goods and services it provides – the natural capital of the planet – be preserved, valued and restored for their intrinsic value and so that they can continue to be the basis of economic prosperity and wellbeing, and to avoid catastrophic changes linked to the loss of biodiversity.

¹ Cibeles, the Earth Mother goddess, is represented in mythology on a chariot drawn by lions, symbolising the superiority of Mother Nature.

For this vision to be reached within one generation, it is necessary to set the target for Europe to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services, and restore them significantly, by 2020.

The species and habitats of special conservation interest should reach a favourable conservation status by 2020. For the same reasons, the European Union, and Europe as a whole, must commit itself to contribute to global efforts to avoid biodiversity loss.

To reach this goal, the means have to match the objectives. It is necessary to set mid-term targets for each priority area, and ensure the presence of appropriate tools, indicators and evaluation methods.

Protected areas and ecological networks lie at the heart of efforts to preserve biodiversity. However, the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services requires us to go beyond these fundamental minimums. It is essential to promote and communicate the ecological and socio-economic benefits of these networks, as well as to integrate the need of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the development and implementation of a great number of sectoral policies so as to reach a truly equitable, fair and sustainable development.

In order to make all this happen, 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. This will mark a new beginning for biodiversity conservation in Europe.

In this framework, the priorities for political action identified at “Cibeles” are:

1. **To incorporate the objectives and targets for biodiversity as part of the European Union Strategy for 2020, which will replace the Gotenburg and Lisbon Strategies** and that must ensure a sustainable development. The preservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of healthy ecosystems that are able to recover from external aggressions must be at the bottom-line of an eco-efficient economy. Therefore it is necessary to integrate biodiversity into the key instruments of economic planning. This integration will make it possible to efficiently tackle the indirect and direct drivers of biodiversity loss at a global, European, national and local level.
2. **To ensure payment for ecosystem services.** The sharing of the benefits that emerge from the use of genetic resources and the payment for biodiversity services must be fully incorporated into the strategies and instruments for financing biodiversity and for its integration into sectoral policies. The economic valuation of biodiversity services must be incorporated in the design and implementation of sectoral policies of the European Union and in the established financing instruments.
3. **To deepen the integration of biodiversity into agriculture, fishing, energy, transport and development policies.** The integration of biodiversity in sectoral policies, particularly those that apply to land and natural resources management, together with the

establishment of protected areas and ecological networks, must support the setting-up of an “Ecological Infrastructure” that allows for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and helps reach a favourable conservation status for the species and habitats that are considered at present to be under threat. This Ecological Infrastructure must allow for the maintenance of the species evolution processes, as well as preventing habitat fragmentation, **improving ecological connectivity and adaptation to climate change**.

4. **To fully apply the Birds and Habitats Directives of the European Union and to complete the establishment of the Natura 2000 and Emerald Networks.** After a long period identifying the sites that must be part of Natura 2000, it is now time to designate them and establish the management plans that will ensure the preservation of their natural values and allow for an economic development that respects such values. The establishment and management of protected areas and ecological networks must respond to the need to adapt to climate change.
5. **To preserve the marine environment.** It is an urgent matter to complete the development of the Natura 2000 Network in the marine environment and to substantially contribute to the establishment of a global network of marine protected areas before 2012, as agreed at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. Moreover, measures must be undertaken at all appropriate levels to ensure that fishing practices, marine transport and the use of marine natural resources are compatible with the conservation of marine biodiversity, which will also contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
6. **To urgently adopt concrete measures to efficiently tackle the problems related to deforestation, to forest, soil and water resources degradation and to the introduction of invasive alien species.** These factors represent, in Europe as in the rest of the world, severe threats for biodiversity. The economic costs that they cause are also a threat. Their negative effects will be magnified by climate change and will increase exponentially over time. Therefore, there is a need to tackle them urgently.
7. **To support the establishment and management of protected areas and ecological networks in third countries.** The establishment and management of Natura 2000 and Emerald Networks represent the implementation at the European level of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas. Europe can take further steps and do more; but in any case, it must continue to support the implementation of this Programme of Work in other parts of the world, through the Life Web Initiative and other bilateral and multilateral programmes.
8. **To boost the integration of scientific knowledge into decision making processes.** Science and progress of technical knowledge play a key role in all previously mentioned issues. Political decisions must be based on the best available knowledge and scientific information. The scientific assessment of the effects of international instruments on biodiversity is key to strengthen them. Therefore it is urgent to establish an Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services that facilitates and catalyzes the interface between science and policy on relevant biodiversity issues.

9. **Reform the global environmental governance system:** The International Year for Biodiversity offers a unique opportunity for reflecting on the adequacy of the institutions, agreements, international mechanisms and decision making processes related to biodiversity at the international level for effectively addressing the challenge of preserving biodiversity. It should be ensured that the global environmental governance system is appropriate for achieving the targets, necessarily ambitious, to be established for tackling the loss of biodiversity.
10. **Establishment of European Action Plans to achieve the 2020 target:** Following the expected adoption of the vision and mission for biodiversity in the EU for 2020 by the Spring Council, the European Commission should present before the end of 2010 proposals on mechanisms and instruments for achieving those. The Council of Europe should take the initiative of preparing a pan-european action plan. These action plans should establish ambitious, realistic, concrete and measurable sub-targets, identify the necessary instruments to achieve them and establish the adequate monitoring and assessment systems that will include the use of indicators.

The Spanish Presidency of the EU intends to discuss these priorities with its partners in the EU and rest of Europe in the appropriate manner and fora with a view to contribute to the establishment of a genuine European agenda for Biodiversity.