

NGO Preparatory Meeting for the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity providing input to the High-Level European Conference on Biodiversity

Gabala, Azerbaijan – The UN has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. Using this unique opportunity, Pan-European stakeholders of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) met in Gabala, Azerbaijan to discuss strategies and ways to move forward, and to identify possible benefits from Pan-European cooperation. CEEweb for Biodiversity organized a preparatory meeting where NGO's from the Pan-European region discussed how to best advocate for effective biodiversity conservation. Together, recommendations were developed regarding the post-2010 vision for Pan-Europe, the role of protected areas, the sustainable use of biodiversity, and the role of these measures in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The preservation of biodiversity provides the basis for sustainable living. Without caring for this fundamental component of the environment, the Pan-European region will not be able to provide opportunities for sustainable lifestyles and communities. Recognizing this, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) designated 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, helping to bring attention to biological resources as the pillars of our civilization, and to the efforts of groups like CEEweb to halt the loss of biodiversity. The 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the CBD will use this special attention directed at improving biodiversity to urge governments and other stakeholders to commit to correcting the failures of the past and setting an ambitious agenda for the future.

What is The Current State of the Convention on Biological Diversity?

Although prior agreements from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in 2002 included commitments to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010, this goal was not achieved due to a number of problems. First among these was a failure to focus squarely on the drivers of biodiversity loss; therefore background effects such as the overexploitation of natural resources, unsustainable use of space, and the excessive production of pollution are still emerging. The drivers of biodiversity loss are rooted in our social and economic systems, founded upon excessively cheap energy and natural resource prices, based on (consequently) continually increasing consumer demand. Without a focus on these drivers, governments can only be reactionary, rather than targeting the practices that generate the loss of biodiversity. Additionally, previous efforts suffered from a lack of clarity with respect to which groups would be responsible for ensuring compliance with the commitments of the Convention, and how compliance would be measured, monitored, and reviewed. With these past issues in mind, CEEweb organized two meetings of Pan-European NGOs to discuss a common approach in advance of the 10th Conference of the Parties to ensure a workable new post-2010 strategic vision for Pan-Europe, and advocate for firm targets to halt the loss of biodiversity. The meeting in Gabala was the second such meeting.

Why Plan an NGO Preparatory Meeting?

Bringing together 40 participants from across the continent, the preparatory meeting provided an opportunity to share ideas and form a consensus. The focus of this meeting was the preparation of NGO recommendations for CBD COP10, particularly with respect to a new strategic plan, but it also dealt with a number of other topics. Special attention was given to formulating well-developed NGO input for the High Level Pan European Conference on Biodiversity, held on 7th July, back-to-back with the NGO meeting. Lectures and breakout group

discussions focused on possible joint projects for implementing nature conservation policies in the region, as well as on developing messages regarding how an adequate post-2010 Pan-European biodiversity vision, protected areas and the sustainable use of biodiversity contribute to human wellbeing.

The overall NGO messages coming out of the meeting focused on how to tackle the drivers of biodiversity loss, how biodiversity conservation can contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, and the shared benefits of cooperation among Pan-European NGOs. At the same time, three concrete project proposals were developed to allow members of the NGO community to cooperate in their practices for the sake of Pan-European natural heritage.

What connects biodiversity, development and poverty reduction?

The High Level Pan-European Conference on Biodiversity was subtitled Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This Conference following the preparatory meeting featured high-level politicians and experts from Pan-European countries elaborating on cooperative strategies and how to move forward after 2010. The conference consisted of three roundtable discussions centered on environmental economics (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity), the connections between protected areas and poverty relief, and the CBD Post-2010 Strategic Plan and biodiversity targets. Negotiations also touched upon how these topics, and investing in them, contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

NGOs were given an opportunity to speak during each of the discussions. Using this chance, the NGOs presented the messages developed during the preparatory meeting, but also their individual views, and as a result some of the NGOs positions were reflected in the conferences official statement, the *Gabala Declaration*. The *Declaration* will serve as one of the inputs into the UN General Assembly during the 20th–22nd of September, 2010. At this meeting, the General Assembly will discuss the process of achieving the MDG's by 2015. For this reason, raising the importance of biodiversity conservation and its contribution to achieving MDGs at the meeting in Gabala was particularly important and appropriate.

About CEEweb for Biodiversity

CEEweb for Biodiversity is an umbrella organization of NGOs in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

Pan-European NGO Coalition

In the framework of the 5th Biodiversity in Europe Conference a Pan-European NGO Coalition was established. During its first preparatory meeting, held in September, 2009, in Liege, Belgium, stakeholders formulated common NGO positions and joined project proposals in order to save the natural heritage of Pan-Europe. As a second step, NGO representatives met in July 2010 in Gabala, Azerbaijan to continue their cooperation.

For further information please contact:

Veronika Kiss, programme coordinator, CEEweb for Biodiversity,
kiss@ceeweb.org, + 36 1 398 0135

Judit Herman, communications coordinator, CEEweb for Biodiversity,
hermanj@ceeweb.org, + 36 1 398 0135