

NGO message to the roundtables
Theme II: Climate change and its impact on biodiversity
Fifth Intergovernmental Conference Biodiversity in Europe

The message was prepared by Pan-European NGOs at the NGO preparatory meeting preceding the Conference on 21 September 2009. It targets participants of the Fifth Intergovernmental Conference Biodiversity in Europe that takes place on 22-24 September 2009 in Liege, Belgium.

The **main message of our NGO community** is that the common drivers behind climate change and biodiversity loss should be sought and researched, and fundamental change in the system of production and consumption is needed to tackle both challenges (in terms of use of natural resources, energy and space).

There is a need for coherent and integrated environmental policy on every level from national to pan-European. Recognition of biodiversity should be increased in all policies (especially in development strategy, spatial planning and energy policy) and at pan-European level. Education, awareness raising and mass media play a crucial role.

1. The importance of biodiversity in a changing climate

Biodiversity and ecosystem services should be given the same priority in climate change policy as greenhouse gases, due to their vital functions of climate regulation, and due to their adaptation capacity for people, bearing in mind people in poor regions who are likely to be particularly vulnerable. We emphasize the high danger of water stress in the future, the adaptation to which should consider the water regulation capacity of healthy ecosystems. Spreading of IAS and diseases are likely to increase due to climate change, and biodiversity should be a key in combating them.

2. The threats, opportunities, positive and negative impacts of climate change mitigation and adaptation

- ⊗ We must seek for measures which do not destroy or degrade ecosystems, but bring benefits for nature conservation (win-win solutions both for climate change and biodiversity). To ensure this, careful and site based biodiversity risk assessments should be essential for all mitigation and adaptation measures in the planning phase.
- ⊗ Biodiversity and ecosystem services should be recognized and employed as key elements of mitigation and adaptation. For that, spatial planning has a key importance: landscape-level protection of biodiversity and ecosystems is needed.
- ⊗ Concerning biomass and biofuels production we agree with CBD statements. We are against conversion of natural areas due to the growing need for biomass and biofuels. Therefore, we call for a study on setting the ratio between nature and anthropogenic space to a sustainable level on Ecoregion base.
- ⊗ However, if land conversion is unavoidable due to food crisis, we support applying the sequential principle (choosing the less valuable areas in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services). Even though, emphasizing the maintenance and improvement of ecological network is still a high priority, which can not be overruled. Furthermore, we go for biodiversity risk assessment or EIA for land use change in areas which are already agricultural, in order to protect soil and agricultural biodiversity. Agri-environmental monitoring programmes should be widened to the whole system.
- ⊗ Overall energy strategy (especially concerning biofuel production) review by civic society is needed in all levels (national, regional, pan-European). We are against subsidies favoring mass biofuel production and mass agriculture in general.
- ⊗ We are against dams as an adoption tool and support employing biodiversity and ecosystems for flood protection.
- ⊗ In the light of the precautionary principle, we do not support GMOs and nanotechnology as adaptation tools.
- ⊗ In adaptation, we emphasize the need for transboundary and regional cooperation

3. The integration of the above in national policies

Strengthening implementation and enforcement of law effecting biodiversity and climate change is of key importance. Climate change should be integrated into land management regulations on national level. Strict monitoring in the system of punishment for degradation and pollution is needed in relation to the polluter pays principle.

Regional specifications

- ✓ Forest and grassland ecosystems of South-Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia are especially exposed to water stress.
- ✓ Steppe biom is endangered in whole Europe due to climate change.
- ✓ Therefore, further research on species and habitats as well as strengthened protection are essential in the above mentioned regions.

Pan-European aspects

- ✓ Extend and strengthen ecological networks
- ✓ Establish marine conservation zones
- ✓ Harmonize monitoring systems
- ✓ Harmonize and coordinate joint research
- ✓ Share experience
- ✓ Enhance transparency
- ✓ Develop pan-European indicators for biodiversity and climate change
- ✓ Combat IAS on pan-European level through monitoring, eradication, etc.