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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## EU prepares new 2020 target to save nature in Europe –NGO network says much more is needed

**Budapest, HUNGARY – The European Commission released this week its Communication proposing options for a new 2020 EU biodiversity[1] target.[2]. As it is clear now that the current target to stop biodiversity loss in the EU by 2010 won't be met, NGOs hoped for a significant change in the political course. Although recognizing some of the shortcomings in recent biodiversity policies, the document still fails to tackle those root causes, which keep reducing the diversity of life in Europe.**

### *Why is biodiversity so important?*

Biodiversity gives the base for ecosystems to operate. The more diverse an ecosystem is the more disturbances it tolerates and the more services it can provide. **Without biodiversity and healthy ecosystems humankind would not have food, clean water, and wood for housing or heating.** The natural mechanisms essential in disease control, flood prevention or climate regulation would not make the conditions on earth hospitable for humans. Humankind receives these services as “presents” from nature only as long as ecosystems can function properly to be able to provide them. The replacement of broken ecosystem functions by man-made technology could incur disproportionately high costs. Since all economic activities and therefore human well-being are based on the undisturbed operation of ecosystem services, their conservation is vital for our survival.

### *Why has the United Nation dedicated 2010 as the International Biodiversity Year?*

On UN level Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity committed themselves to **significantly reducing** biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010. At the same time, at EU level Member States committed themselves to a stricter target, **halting** biodiversity loss by 2010. Most probably, both of these aspiring targets won't be met. Therefore, 2010 is a crucial year for taking stock, assessing the reasons of failure and designing new policies that will truly help save nature in Europe as well as globally. The UN announced 2010 as the International Biodiversity Year to enhance awareness on this issue.

### *Missing the 2010 target*

Notwithstanding the efforts made for biodiversity conservation, recent assessments show that its loss is still continuing. Worldwide, **more than a third of species assessed are facing extinction** and an estimated **60% of the Earth's ecosystems have been degraded in the last 50 years**, with negative consequences for the ecosystems services that flow out of them<sup>1</sup>. The first large-scale assessment of Europe's most vulnerable habitats and species showed that only 17% were in a favourable state. Grasslands, wetlands, estuary and coastal habitats are at greatest risk<sup>2</sup>.

### *Innovative approaches of the Communication*

Among the new initiatives introduced by the Communication CEEweb welcomes the Commission's support to establish an Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). This platform should replicate the success of the Nobel Prize winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which played a prime role in climate science becoming politically accepted. IPBES would

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<sup>1</sup> 'Millennium Ecosystem Assessment', 2005

<sup>2</sup> Composite Report on the Conservation Status of Habitat Types and Species as required under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, COM(2009) 358

estimate *inter alia* how much pressure biodiversity can withstand before its loss becomes irreversible – with potentially catastrophic consequences. Secondly, CEEweb supports the initiative of identifying and mapping of key ecosystem services and factoring them into the future biodiversity policies. Finally, CEEweb also welcomes the development of a Green Infrastructure for Europe to engage in biodiversity conservation on 83% of EU's territory not covered by the Natura 2000 network.

### *Shortcomings of the Communication*

According to the Communication the causes of not achieving the 2010 target are implementation gaps, policy gaps, knowledge and data gaps, lack of biodiversity integration into other policies, lack of funding, and neglecting the principle of equity. In contrary, CEEweb for Biodiversity sees the most important reason for the lack of delivery in the fact that decision makers ignore the drivers behind environmental pressures [2]. No matter how much efforts is made on reducing environmental pressures like habitat fragmentation, degradation and destruction, over-exploitation, the spread of invasive species and pollution; these pressures will be continuously regenerated if the fundamental drivers behind remain unchanged.

Sarolta Tripolszky, EU biodiversity policy coordinator of CEEweb said, “Current policies should be rethought and a new regulatory framework should be set up that can tackle environmental and social challenges *at the same time* and can improve human wellbeing in the long term. This, however, requires a change how we approach our problems, and the EU should be spearheading in this process. This is the only chance to face challenges related to the financial, food and fuel crisis of today – while scientists are already warning about the ecological crisis of tomorrow.”

### About CEEweb for Biodiversity

CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of non-governmental organizations in Central and Eastern Europe working together to protect the biological heritage of the region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

### For further information please contact

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### Editors' notes

[1] Biodiversity means the diversity of life on Earth. It means having many types of species (e.g. fox, deer, lynx), many types within species (*Brassica oleracea* is a plant species that has many cultivated versions: Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, collard greens, Chinese broccoli and kohlrabi are all its varieties), many types between species like different plants, animals, fungi or bacteria and many types of ecosystems.

[2] The Communication on Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010 can be found at: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/policy/pdf/communication\\_2010\\_0004.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/policy/pdf/communication_2010_0004.pdf)

[2] Environmental pressures are the direct effects of human activities on the environment, in the case of biodiversity loss they include habitat fragmentation, degradation and destruction, over-exploitation, the spread of invasive species and pollution. These pressures are caused by the underlying socio-economic drivers. CEEweb identifies structural drivers (e.g. consumption and production patterns, infrastructures, urban structures), institutional drivers (e.g. economic and legal regulations, sectoralisation in institutions, the education system) and cultural drivers (knowledge, approach, values of the people). Socio-economic drivers touch upon the most fundamental characteristics of the functioning of the society and economy.