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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## Civil initiative to solve the environmental and social problems in the spotlight of 2010

**Budapest, HUNGARY – UNEP has declared 2010 as the international biodiversity year, at the same time 2010 is the European year for fighting against poverty and social exclusion. The international network, CEEweb for Biodiversity has started a joint project with social NGOs for commonly handling social and environmental problems.**

Why is 2010 important for us, Hungarians? Firstly, because in spring parliamentary, and in autumn local elections will take place. Secondly, as citizens of the EU our lives are determined also by the EU processes, as by the new „EU 2020” development strategy which is substituting the Lisbon Strategy after 2010. Learning from the shortcomings of the current strategy, the new strategy should use economy, economic growth as only tools to contribute to European well-being. However, this can only be achieved by saving biodiversity and by reducing social inequities. Thirdly, 2010 is important period also because in the first half of 2011 Hungary will be holding the serial presidency for the EU. Thus, the preparation is already in full swing.

### **Poverty and environmental problems – The global and European objectives for 2010**

The UN International Biodiversity Year aims that the variety of life on Earth would get more attention globally than ever. The UN emphasizes that saving biodiversity is our own interest because biological resources are the pillars of our civilization, as the ecosystem services deriving from them are the base for our social well-being and economical functioning. Therefore, generations of today have the duty to save biodiversity for the future. In the light of this period, events are being organized, which reveal that saving biodiversity is crucial in order to secure social well-being and prosperity.

The European Year aims to realize that social togetherness and the fight against poverty and social exclusion are strengthened. Various programs are helping form real political commitment, raise awareness, frame opinion, and strengthen social participation of people living in poverty.

### **A civil initiative – Common causes, common solutions?**

Taking advantage of the potentials of 2010, CEEweb for Biodiversity has started a joint project co-operating with social NGOs. The initiative has given priority to work out recommendations for tackling environmental and social problems and to spread them in a wide range. Hereby, the coalition wants to influence decision-makers in order that these issues would be paid more political attention.

Ecological and social problems pose cumulative challenges to the decision-makers and the whole society. At the same time, achievement of various targets and goals (Halting biodiversity loss till 2010, aims of the Lisbon strategy, etc.) does not seem likely. Using natural resources beyond limits, growing poverty, unemployment and the economic crisis pose further challenges to the greens and to the professionals in the social sectors. It is a core problem, which is seen

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adequately neither the decision-makers nor other stakeholders. Without revealing the connections between problems arising from different areas, giving proper solutions for their final causes is impossible.

As Sarolta Tripolszky, the program coordinator said: „In 2010 the environmental and social problems will be considered more through the European Year of fighting against poverty and social exclusion and through the UN International Biodiversity Year. Therefore, this is the very right time for this civil initiative launched by CEEweb to influence decision-makers to tackle the problems simultaneously.”

In the frame of this civil initiative, recommendations are being worked out with the contribution of green and social representatives. Objectives such as the harmonization of green and social politics and public awareness raising have been already formulated. Based on the suggestions developed at the project opening conference, the coalition partners jointly will work out specific recommendations, which will be circulated at various decision-maker platforms. Therefore, these recommendations can play important role in implementing different international („EU 2020” Strategy, Post-2010 Biodiversity Target) commitments. Furthermore, achievements of this initiative can also give a good base for the preparation to the 2011 Hungarian EU presidency.

#### About CEEweb for Biodiversity:

CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of non-governmental organizations in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

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