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PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
“ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE”

BIODIVERSITY

BELGRADE STATEMENT ON BIODIVERSITY¹

Proposed category I document²

Submitted by the Council for the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

¹ The text in this document is submitted as received from the authors.

² Documents for possible action by Ministers (signature, endorsement, approval, adoption, discussion) submitted through and endorsed by the WGSO (ECE/CEP/AC.11/2006/5, Section II).

We, the European Ministers and heads of delegations of the countries participating in the PEBLDS process, gathered in Belgrade from 10-12 October 2007 for the Sixth Ministerial Conference *Environment for Europe*,

Reaffirming our commitment to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation on Sustainable Development, and the Millennium Development Goals, with its recently adopted biodiversity target,

Reiterating our commitment to the 2010 biodiversity target as expressed in the Strategic Plan to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity and the European Council Declaration by the European Union adopted in 2001 in Gothenburg,

Underlining that the Environment for Europe process is an important platform for Pan-European cooperation with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Europe, and that the Sixth Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe offers the opportunity to assess and evaluate the Kyiv commitments given that halting the loss of biodiversity is a priority for the pan-European region,

Emphasizing that biodiversity and human well-being are inextricably linked, because biodiversity benefits people in a variety of ways including through its contribution to material welfare and livelihoods, security, resilience to climate change, social relations, health, food, recreation and fuels as well as freedom of choices and actions, as pointed out by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and that the pan-European region represents a living environment and provides livelihoods for millions of people, having a rich natural heritage and enormous economic potential, but facing rapid environmental, social and economic changes with different development patterns in Western Europe, South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia,

Welcoming the *GreenForce* initiative led by the European Commission in co-operation with its member states encouraging cooperation among implementing institutions and practitioners facilitating exchange of experience, capacity building and cooperation for implementation of legislation,

Recognizing the support of UNEP and the Council of Europe for the conservation and sustainable use of the pan-European natural heritage through hosting the Joint Secretariat of PEBLDS and the implementation of relevant activities,

Appreciating the contribution of the European Environment Agency, CEEWEB, ECNC, ECO-Forum and IUCN and many other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their assistance in the efforts to achieve the Kyiv targets at the pan-European level,

Welcoming and supporting the increasing involvement of regions and local authorities in the achievement of the 2010 target as manifested at the *Regions as Champions for Biodiversity 2010* Conference and in the Brabant - Oisterwijk Appeal,

Express the following:

Achievements

We note with satisfaction that since 2003, regional, sub-regional, national, sub-national and local activities have been ongoing in Western Europe, South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia to address the 2010 biodiversity target,

We recognize the strategic framework endorsed in 2006 by the Environment Council of the EU *Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond: Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being* with an annexed action plan, which aims to pull together actors and resources at EU and Member State levels to implement the actions that can make the greatest contribution towards achieving the 2010 biodiversity target,

We recognize the progress in the implementation of the European Landscape Convention and that these actions are supportive of the achievement of the biodiversity targets in the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity,

We welcome the formation of a Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change under the Bern Convention to provide information and guidance to Parties on understanding climate change impacts and threats, and provide tools and support to develop appropriate adaptation measures in national policies regarding the species and habitats protected under the Bern Convention,

We recognize the initiatives and activities carried out at the pan-European level in order to assist in the achievement of the Kyiv biodiversity targets, which include *inter alia*:

- a) The technical and political progress for the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN), under the PEBLDS framework, which has increasing relevance within adaptation to climate change, biological and landscape diversity conservation and protected areas programmes at the pan-European, national, regional and local levels, and which is underpinned by the Natura 2000 and Emerald networks;
- b) The Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators project led by the European Environment Agency, in collaboration with the PEBLDS, UNEP-WCMC, the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC), and other partners, to review, test, refine, document and help produce specific biodiversity indicators;
- c) The cooperation between the Environment for Europe/PEBLDS and the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) on issues such as sustainable forest management and the ecosystem approach; illegal logging and related trade; and afforestation and reforestation guidelines;
- d) The progress on raising awareness of the importance of High Nature Value farmland, and activities related to its identification and conservation in the pan-European region, as a result of the efforts of the PEBLDS, the EEA, ECO-Forum and the WWF, as well as the integration of biodiversity and HNV farmland in agricultural policy in Europe;

- e) The implementation of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species adopted in 2003 under the Bern Convention, and the ongoing activities implemented by the Bern Convention as the European forum for invasive alien species, as well as activities at the national and regional level to address the threats posed by invasive alien species;
- f) The efforts of the Countdown 2010 Initiative which includes more than 200 partners from governments, non-governmental organizations, business and local authorities from the entire pan-European region working together with concrete commitments towards halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010;
- g) The progress in Biodiversity Financing in the framework of the European Task Force for Banking, Business and Biodiversity under PEBLDS, resulting in increased practical partnerships with the finance and business sector, pilot projects and the development of a Biodiversity Finance Technical Facility;
- h) The continued efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations at all levels to implement the programmes of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity and their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

Challenges

We note with concern the finding in the Belgrade Report by the European Environment Agency that the 2010 biodiversity target will be difficult to attain unless considerable additional efforts are made. Habitat destruction, fragmentation and degradation as well as the rapid spread of invasive alien species is increasing in Europe and affecting particularly farmland, mountain regions and coastal zones. Furthermore, European hotspots of endemic species are at risk because of the effects of climate change and the lack of space between habitats to allow for adaptation, current and future economic costs of all of these losses could reach billions of Euros,

We recognize the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change, notably the impact of climate change on species and habitats, on the migratory patterns of species, and on the European landscape. A meeting between the Bureau of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity and representatives of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in March 2007 confirmed the growing negative impact of climate change on biodiversity,

We are aware that important drivers of biodiversity loss worldwide include governance failures, and the failure of conventional economics to recognize the economic values of natural capital and ecosystem services and therefore *note the urgent need* to engage all economic sectors in biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use,

We also note with concern the implications on global biodiversity conservation of the rapidly increasing ecological footprint of Europe.

Commitments and way forward

We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity, which was adopted in 2003 at the Fifth Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe in Kyiv, Ukraine and highlighted as key issues for Europe: forests and biodiversity, agriculture and biodiversity, the Pan-European Ecological Network, invasive alien species, financing of biodiversity, biodiversity monitoring and indicators, and public participation and awareness,

We stress the need for an intersectoral approach to climate change and *we support* and welcome the Chair's Conclusions of the March 2007 meeting in Potsdam, Germany, of the Environment Ministers of the Group of Eight countries and the Environment Ministers of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, highlighting that climate change and the loss of biodiversity are serious global challenges and that biodiversity should be at the top of the political agenda,

We will continue to support the implementation of the Pan-European Ecological Network as an important means for protecting biodiversity in Europe, enhancing landscape permeability for wildlife populations, communities and assemblages, for adaptation and mitigation of climate change effects, to conserve ecosystems and provide humans with life-supporting services, and for the application of the global programme of work on protected areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the pan-European level; and therefore *will foster* programmes for the development, restoration and strengthening of ecological connectivity between core areas of European importance,

We emphasize that for the conservation of the rich natural heritage of the pan-European region and for the improvement of human wellbeing it is necessary to reconcile land use and development needs with the conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecosystem services,

We will cooperate actively with all stakeholders who have an important role to play, including landowners and land users, local, national and regional authorities, the private sector, financial institutions and the public as a whole, as well as intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations, in the efforts to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target and we will encourage interested stakeholders to join the growing network of Countdown 2010 partners,

We will support the further cooperation between PEBLDS and the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) on joint pan-European priorities concerning forest biological diversity,

We express our conviction that the cooperation and support from the European Community and its Member States is crucial to address the challenges of the conservation of biodiversity and the reconciliation of development and the use of biodiversity in the pan-European region while taking into account the special needs and conditions in the countries of the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian region,

We commit to promote the integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into national sectoral policies and to make efforts to mobilize the necessary resources to attain the 2010 goal while recognizing the challenges that remain to achieve in time the 2010 biodiversity target at the pan-European level,

We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, which was endorsed in 1995 at the Third Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe in Sofia, Bulgaria, and has been reconfirmed by successive Environment for Europe conferences and *we support* the need to strengthen the role, operations and structure of the PEBLDS, in the light of developments on the global and European Union level, and request the Council of PEBLDS to elaborate and implement these improvements with terms of reference reflecting a dynamic, streamlined and effective strategy that meets the current needs of the pan- European region.
