

Talking Points for Ron Hoffer¹
Wednesday October 10th
4:30 – 6:30 PM Special Session

"Roundtable on biodiversity"

- Distinguished Chairs - - Honorable Ministers - - delegates - - fellow panellists - - ladies and gentlemen....
- I am pleased to present a few remarks on the World Bank's experience and perspective in supporting agricultural environment schemes for the conservation of high nature-value farmland in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Over the last 15 years, the World Bank has had a strong presence on natural resources management and nature conservation - - initially because of our role as an Implementing Agency for the Global Environment Facility - - but increasingly because of our profile as an international financial institution with global experience in this area.
- Over the last 15 years GEF, through the World Bank, has provided \$470 million in grants to the region which leveraged \$1.7 billion in co-financing. Roughly 20 percent of GEF support has been provided under its Biodiversity Operational Program.
- These investments have supported the establishment of protected area management systems, sustainable forest management (including pilot efforts in support of forest certification), coastal zone management, and wetlands conservation.
- What is different about nature conservation in Europe, compared to much of the Bank's global experience, is that we tend to focus more on conserving landscapes, rather than on specific habitats, because it is a more appropriate recognition of the rich mosaic of land-uses which characterizes the rural environment in Europe. This is why the theme of this discussion - supporting agricultural environmental schemes for the conservation of high nature value landscapes - is so important.

We see several key challenges; these include the need for:

¹ The present document is a scanned copy of a statement received on 11 October 2007 during the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007). The document has not been formally processed by the UNECE.

- First; supporting pre-accession and new accession countries in aligning institutional, legal, and policy frameworks for nature conservation with the EU Environmental *acquis* - particularly the Birds and Habitats Directives, and their implementing modalities through *Natura 2000*;
- Next; providing support for expanding national systems of protected areas on the one hand while putting in place systems for conserving biodiversity outside of areas with formally protected status on the other;
- And finally, transitioning out of GEF support, which is no longer easily available for biodiversity conservation, and moving toward other financing mechanisms.

To cite a few examples of our experience:

- In Romania, we supported, with a \$5.5 million GEF grant, the development and expansion of the national system of protected areas. When the project began, there were a few national parks, but they were significant gaps in staffing as well as the institutional basis for management. After 6 years, Romania now has a fully-fledged national system of protected areas. These parks are capably staffed and managed, with comprehensive and participatory management plans in place.
- I should add that, because of property restitution, many of these areas are actually privately owned, and the challenge has become one of bringing about better management of these important landscapes through catalyzing the types of agri-environment initiatives which are vitally important in these rural areas.
- Turkey, as you may know, is among the richest in Europe in terms of the range of species endemic to the country and overall species diversity. Three Global biodiversity hot spots are found within its borders, and it is hugely important in terms of its critical habitats. Yet in spite all of this, the area under formal protection as national and natural parks is less than a quarter of the European average.

- Without vastly and rapidly expanding the national and natural park system, the key to biodiversity conservation in Turkey will likely rest in protecting rural landscapes outside of protected areas through the type of Agri-environmental programs which have been strongly supported by the EU through CAP Pillar 2.
- We piloted such an initiative in Turkey through the Agricultural Reform Implementation Programme, which established a pioneering environmental set-asides program. The set-asides program operates in several Important Bird Areas. Farmers received area-based payments for adopting environmentally appropriate land-uses, with an objective to improve the condition of the wetlands.
- The outcomes from this effort were reduced agricultural water consumption and nutrient runoff in pilot areas by up to 30 percent; resulting in increased water flows into wetland areas and expansion of wetland habitats for birdlife. It is this type of intervention, which when scaled up can have a real impact on reducing biodiversity loss.
- I am just citing these few examples as the kind of work we are supporting in the region, both with GEF financing, as well as with IDA credits and IBRD loans.
- The impact of Bank support for biodiversity conservation and on countries' development agenda is evident when looking at the interventions over time, across sectors, and in the broader context of the Bank assistance program.
- Our support has been critical to assist government and foster donor attention and resources to achieve complimentary gains in agriculture and biodiversity protection. We look forward to continuing and expanding this important work with you.
- Thank you for your attention.