

**Keynote**  
by **Mr. Robert Palmer**  
Director of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage  
the Council of Europe<sup>1</sup>

**Biodiversity stakeholders' Roundtable -10 October, 16.30**

Dear Ministers,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

**Introduction**

The Council of Europe has been working on nature protection policies and biodiversity conservation for more than 40 years. Throughout this time, the threat facing European nature has been increasing and now represents a major political issue in our countries, in particular with the additional problem of climate change.

We have now reached a point where we are fully aware that facing these threats, European biodiversity provides an irreplaceable legacy for future generations - to ensure that our descendants have access to nature and to all the material and spiritual wealth that it represents. In order to keep this legacy and to develop it, it is our duty to go a step further in the protection of sites in order to conserve a complete set of ecosystems, habitats, species, genes and landscapes of European importance and to ensure ecological connectivity throughout Europe.

**The PEBLDS process**

Twelve years have passed since the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference of Sofia where the Ministers for Environment made a solemn appeal for the conservation of biodiversity and endorsed the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, and one of its major programmes, the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in Kyiv in 2003, the Ministers and representatives of governments issued a Resolution on Biodiversity, expressing the need to adopt the appropriate measures and intensify their efforts to improve the global environment. They reiterated their share of political responsibility towards the goal of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. You all know better than me why it is so important to achieve this important goal.

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is a scanned copy of a statement received on 10 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.

The challenges announced in Sofia are still valid.

The Pan-European Ecological Network represents nowadays a key instrument for conserving and managing species, ecosystems, habitats and landscapes, within a harmonious global approach to spatial planning that contributes to the sustainable development of the peoples of Europe.

It has now reached a crucial stage in its implementation and it is now time to report to you on what has been done and what the next steps ahead are.

This is why I am very pleased to present to you today the Report, "The Pan-European Ecological Network: taking stock" which includes a poster reproducing the indicative maps and our Message to the ministers and policy makers. This Message that we wish to address to you, the Ministers and policy makers, summarises the main findings and results presented in the Report. This paper underlines the positive results, identifies the gaps, sets medium-term objectives for 2010 and presents recommendations for future action in view of the full implementation of this wide European programme.

The results obtained so far and presented in this Report provide important points of satisfaction: the challenges and the achievements in the implementation of PEEN indicate the road ahead for political action to achieve the 2010 goal. The countries of the Pan-European region have made major, tangible progress since the Kyiv Conference which is contributing to ensuring greater consideration for biological realities in their policies, legal systems and institutions.

Since Kyiv the idea has taken shape and numerous initiatives have made it possible to give practical expression to what yesterday was no more than a concept relying on political will alone. The Pan-European Ecological Network is now assuming different tangible forms and representations and it already constitutes a coherent framework, founded on a common, shared vision of Europe's natural environment, with sustainable development and biological and landscape diversity as the goals.

However, the important issue of biodiversity mainstreaming into sectoral policies has still to be enhanced. Much remains to be done to integrate environmental considerations into sectoral and vertical policies and more specifically to take ecological networks into account when framing and implementing such policies. As a tool for sustainable development, the Pan-European Ecological Network needs to be backed by strong political will so as to continue to stimulate ecological connectivity initiatives.

The process of the PEEN provides the governments of the countries of the Pan-European region with a political framework for action at all levels; local, regional, national and international - enabling them to provide sustainable socio-economic development in their respective countries, by conserving the biological and landscape diversity on which such development is largely based.

By 2010 and beyond, a sustainable Europe will not be reached if we do not succeed in preserving our natural environment with all the ecological services we obtain from it.

This is why I express the hope that you will welcome these documents and take them into account when defining future priorities in national and international policies.

It is my firm wish that the recommendations and resolutions of this 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference will deliver the political support for the development of ecological networks in Europe.

I wish you pleasant reading.

Thank-you