

Message from Athens on the future of Biodiversity policies

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The Athens conference (Biodiversity protection beyond 2010: priorities and options for future EU policy) was attended by leading scientists, politicians, economists and academics from all EU Member States, and by representatives from civil society and business. The six workshops, chaired by leading experts in the field, ensured that the various aspects of biodiversity policies were examined in full. Europe has an independent commitment to halt biodiversity loss in the EU by 2010, and a biodiversity action plan with more than 150 actions to help it reach that target. But a recent review concluded that the target was unlikely to be reached without a substantial additional effort.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/brochures/bio_brochure_en.pdf

A eight-point plan for nature protection

A wealth of new ideas was discussed at the conference, leading up to the message from Athens. The main points of the message are :

1. A vision of why biodiversity matters. A better understanding is needed of the fact that healthy ecosystems deliver tangible benefits underpinning our economic, social and cultural well-being. The message of "why biodiversity matters" needs to be clear and made more prominent.
2. A better understanding of where we are and what we need to do. Better information on the state of biodiversity and current trends in biodiversity is crucial. A better understanding of how natural systems work is also needed. The conference recommended that biodiversity research should be made a higher priority.
3. A fully functioning network of protected areas. One of the great successes of recent years has been the consolidation of Natura 2000, Europe's network of protected areas. The terrestrial part of the network should be completed by 2010 and the marine part soon after.
4. Protecting "ordinary" biodiversity in Europe. The statement stresses that biodiversity policy should evolve towards the protection of the resilience and vitality of entire ecosystems, as well as high nature value protected areas.
5. Protecting global biodiversity. Europe's "biodiversity footprint" in the rest of the world is large and is growing, and this needs to be addressed. Global deforestation must be stopped by 2030, and measures are needed to address the impact of European patterns of consumption on global biodiversity loss.
6. Integration of biodiversity into other policy areas. The message recognizes the importance of integrating that biodiversity concerns into other policy areas. More research is needed to identify areas where greater account needs to be taken of biodiversity impacts.
7. Funding. Although many EU and national funds can theoretically channel funds toward biodiversity protection, the actual level of financial resources allocated to nature protection remains relatively small. This needs to be addressed, and new funding made available if necessary.
8. Climate Change. We cannot solve biodiversity loss without addressing climate change and vice versa. We therefore need to look for the "triple win" of biodiversity that can actively contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation. This presupposes that climate measures are fully compatible with policies for the protection of biodiversity.

Source : European Community Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism

<http://biodiversity-chm.eea.europa.eu/>