



Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations

Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

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**At the High-Level Meeting of the UN General
Assembly as a contribution to the International Year
of Biodiversity**

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

President, Secretary General, Your Excellencies,

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

This meeting is a unique and welcome opportunity to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity. It is also perhaps one of the last opportunities to exchange views before the Nagoya meeting, where important decisions will be taken that set the course of global biodiversity policy and action for the next decade.

It is significant that our meeting today coincides with the Millennium Development Goals Summit.

Biodiversity - and the ecosystem services it provides - cuts across many of the goals, and not just MDG 7. Our ability to end poverty and hunger, and improve child and maternal health depends on the long-term availability of fresh water, food, medicine and raw materials that nature provides.

It is also clear that we will not be able to mitigate climate change or adapt to its impacts, or prevent desertification and land degradation, if we don't protect our ecosystems and biodiversity.

And yet, despite these inter-linkages, we have collectively failed to reach our 2010 biodiversity target. Instead, we continue to lose biodiversity at an unprecedented rate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are standing at a crossroads: either we take concerted action to reverse biodiversity loss as soon as possible, or we compromise our own future and that of generations not yet born.

Nagoya is our chance to turn the situation around. It is our chance to make decisions that will strengthen implementation of the Convention's three key objectives.

Firstly, it is important that we adopt a new and effective strategic plan; one that encourages collective action and is supported by all those who use biodiversity and whose activities have an impact on it.

This plan must be sufficiently ambitious to force all Parties to the Convention to raise their game; to tackle the key drivers of biodiversity loss; to prevent ecological tipping points from being reached.

Secondly, it is important that we finally conclude negotiations on the Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, as we have pledged to do on several

occasions. The Protocol should ensure transparency, legal certainty and predictability for those seeking access to genetic resources, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from them.

I am reassured by the spirit of collaboration and partnership during the negotiations in Montreal in the last days. However, hard work is still ahead of us to find answers to the unresolved questions. Agreeing on a meaningful Protocol will require full political commitment by all Parties and the willingness to compromise.

Thirdly, it is important that we agree on how best to build capacity and mobilise resources – scientific, technological, human and financial – to enable all Parties to implement their commitments under the Convention.

The European Union has committed, as part of its 2020 biodiversity target, to step up its contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. Over the period 2002 to 2008, we provided over \$1 billion for global biodiversity annually. In addition, EU Member States contributed significantly to the recent replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, for which \$1.2 billion is earmarked for biodiversity. This represents a 28% increase compared to the last replenishment.

And of course there are other ways, beyond new and additional public finance, to further enhance implementation of our commitments under the Convention. We need to explore all options, including both the reform, elimination and reorientation of subsidies harmful to biodiversity, and private funding such as payments for ecosystem services and other market-based instruments.

The European Union is prepared to work together with all Parties to improve and ensure long term, sustainable support for implementation. But it is also our view that this responsibility be shared by all Parties. Indeed, increased efforts are needed by all of us to ensure that biodiversity objectives are given sufficient priority in government plans and programmes.

The messages in the international study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity are clear; valuing biodiversity and ecosystem services should come naturally. After all, investing in biodiversity is not a luxury – it is a sound investment that can bring multiple benefits.

Let me conclude by saying that the European Union welcomes the decision reached in the Republic of Korea last June on the need to establish an Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. We look forward to a positive decision by the General Assembly, before the end of the year, to establish this platform in 2011.

Thank you.