



Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations

Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

**H.E. Mr. Janez Potočnik
European Commissioner for the Environment**

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

**Panel discussion: "The way forward in achieving the three objectives of the
Convention on Biological Diversity, and the internationally agreed
biodiversity goals and targets"**

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our meeting today is historic. For the first time the challenge of biodiversity loss is discussed in this forum with such a number of high-level participants.

The European Union considers this to be a major challenge, on par with climate change. Since the adoption of the 2010 biodiversity target, the European Union has stepped up its action to conserve biodiversity and ensure its sustainable use. On the conservation side, close to 18% of the territory of the European Union is now covered by our so-called 'Natura 2000' network of nature protection areas, and is still expanding both on land and at sea.

We also have some of the strongest environmental legislation in the world. By setting high standards for the environmental status of our water, our air, our soil and our seas, we are also contributing to protecting our biodiversity.

And we have made efforts to reduce the negative impacts of our consumption patterns on biodiversity, both within the EU and beyond. For instance, legislation was just adopted to prevent illegally harvested timber from accessing the EU market.

But it is clear that much more needs to be done.

Earlier this year, the European Union adopted a new biodiversity target in which we have committed to halt biodiversity loss in the EU and restore ecosystems where possible, as well as step up our efforts to avert global biodiversity loss. This is a pledge we stand behind.

We are now developing our own EU strategy to allow us to reach our 2020 target. Sustainable use of biodiversity will be a central part of this new strategy. Evidently, we hope that the outcome of Nagoya will provide an ambitious framework to guide the further development of this strategy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The agreement in June on the need to establish an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services was a major step forward. The General Assembly now needs to confirm this decision to make the platform operational in 2011.

We now need to capitalise on this success and deliver on all three priorities of the agenda in Nagoya.

We need a strategic plan that responds to the scientific evidence that is available to us. A plan that ensures that dangerous biodiversity loss is avoided, so that future generations also benefit from the goods and services that nature provides.

It will also be essential that we conclude negotiations on the Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing. Now it is time to deliver.

It will not be impossible to achieve our commonly agreed development goals if we do not succeed in Nagoya. Neither will we be able to mitigate and adapt to climate change if the loss of ecosystems continues at the current rate.

To achieve our biodiversity objectives a new level of collaboration between all of us will be necessary. Together we will have to increase our efforts to preserve and use sustainably our

natural capital. Ecological recapitalisation is just as essential as the financial recapitalisation efforts we have undertaken over the past two years.

I hope that in ten years' time the "biodiversity picture" will look very different, in Europe and throughout the world. This meeting should send to Nagoya a message of hope and determination for a future in which human societies and nature coincide in a sustainable and mutually beneficial way.

Thank you.