

LISBON DECLARATION OF ENGOS ON THE *BUSINESS AND BIODIVERSITY* INITIATIVE

On September the 26th 2007, the Seminar *Civil Society, Business and Biodiversity* was held in Lisbon, organized by Quercus – National Association for Nature Conservation, Foundation Caring for the Future and Foundation Calouste Gulbenkian. The following day several Environmental Non Governmental Organisations (ENGOS) attended a workshop organized by Quercus and Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR) – the Confederation of German NGOs, to discuss their expectations on the initiative of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union on *Business and Biodiversity*, to be launched in November 2007. Together they prepared a joint statement which is supported by those and other ENGOS.

The undersigned state that:

1. The *Business and Biodiversity* Initiative that will be launched by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union Council should be welcomed as a positive move in the framework of corporate social responsibility towards the environment. Corporations and enterprises are crucial players in determining the patterns of natural resource consumption in our society and thus have direct or indirect impacts on the functioning of Ecosystems Services and Biodiversity. The business sector therefore needs to be seriously involved in and committed to the EU goal of halting the loss of biodiversity till 2010 and beyond.
2. The *Business and Biodiversity* Initiative is understood as a contribution to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Companies should therefore commit themselves to the three main objectives of the CBD, which are: conservation of the diversity of animal and plant species, ecosystems and genetic diversity; Sustainable use of natural resources; Fair distribution of advantages and profits resulting from the use of genetic resources. Particular attention should be given to the use of genetic material for medicine. In this respect Pharmaceutical businesses have to be strictly regulated and the process of benefit sharing should always include the participation of indigenous and local communities.
3. *Business and Biodiversity* is a voluntary initiative and therefore must be seen as a complementary action to other efforts in the framework of policies of the EU towards Biodiversity protection, whilst ensuring coherence with these same policies. It must be regarded as neither a solution nor a substitution of instruments such as Directives and Regulations. Given that in many cases and countries existing legislation is poorly implemented and enforced, the undersigned urge the EU bodies to better enforce and implement the legal instruments already existing and to fundamentally reform and green the agriculture sector of the EU with the goal to stop the loss of biodiversity. The reform of the CAP subsidy system towards support payments to the environment and rural development is fundamental.
4. Natura 2000, the network of protected areas under the Habitats and Bird Directive is an European-wide pool of biodiversity. It should be regarded as a preferential target for nature conservation activities in the framework of the *Business and Biodiversity*. Natura 2000 is a European reality and should be protected and cared by all Europeans, including companies.
5. *Business and Biodiversity* should include a solid mechanism for a systematic approach to Biodiversity within the company's policies, strategies, operations including the activities of their supply chains. In this sense the integration of biodiversity considerations into analytical tools such as environmental site impact assessments or into environmental reporting systems is needed. *Business and Biodiversity* mechanisms should also foresee the assignment of a senior executive with specific responsibilities for biodiversity management. To prevent greenwashing it must not be just a list of principles to be undersigned by companies, or a marketing based incentive to trigger more donations or sponsoring for nature conservation or research.

6. *Business and Biodiversity*, launched by the Portuguese Presidency, could continue throughout the subsequent Presidencies and beyond those. If successful and genuine according to the above criteria, it should become a mechanism permanently supported by the European Commission services. This could include an independent body with a secretariat to steer the process and to assess the functioning, results and positive impacts of *Business and Biodiversity* mechanisms on Biodiversity conservation. These resources should only be regarded as additional to, and never substitute, the resources required for European Commission Services and National authorities to implement and monitor the existing regulations and policies concerning biodiversity.
7. *Business and Biodiversity* should emphasise the role and contribution that medium, small and micro enterprises may give to Biodiversity conservation. SMEs are the major economic drive force of many countries in the EU and through their own activity they may improve nature conservation and contribute to sustainable local economies in Natura 2000 and other areas.
8. *Business and Biodiversity* should develop guidelines as well as set performance benchmarks for companies from relevant specific sectors, such as: Tourism, Fisheries, Forest, Agriculture, Mining and Energy. For each sector specific indicators should be developed, independently verified and monitored. As a start the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label should be used for the forest sector, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for the Fisheries sector, and the tourism guidelines that are included in the CBD should be used as a basis for indicators for the tourism sector. For the agriculture sector the European ecological farming scheme could be used. Traditional farming should be integrated into the farming scheme and the farming sector itself should be integrated into the Business and Biodiversity Initiative. Indicators for the energy sector should be developed in the near future, including specific indicators for renewable energy production. In the long run standards and later on a label for biodiversity friendly companies should be introduced. These standards should be credible in their criteria and subject to independent verification. Special attention should be given to agrobiodiversity promotion, the releasing of Genetically Modified Organisms and to agro-fuels and their predictable negative impacts on Biodiversity. Additionally, the *Business and Biodiversity* initiative should support biodiversity in rural planning and in the agricultural sector in general.
9. Activities for nature conservation under *Business and Biodiversity* should use as far as possible accurate scientific data from field research, either to assess the real needs for Biodiversity improvement, or to monitor the results achieved, if possible with ecological indicators to be provided by the research community.
10. *Business and Biodiversity* should consider the external relations of the EU with the rest of the world and its implications on Biodiversity. Our activities and consumption patterns rely to a significant extent on resource extraction and production through operations outside EU boundaries. Therefore, this initiative should be promoted in other forums and organizations, such as the World Trade Organization and in the near future it should be used for the next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.



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