

Message from Lisbon on Business and Biodiversity

We the Ministers and representatives from governments, business and civil society participating in the High level Conference on Business and Biodiversity organized by the Portuguese Presidency of the EU Council, held in Lisbon, Portugal from 12 to 13 November 2007:

Convinced that as part of the common efforts to implement the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and in particular CBD Decision VIII/17 on private sector engagement, there is a strong business case for biodiversity, including the competitive advantage gained from conserving biodiversity and using biological resources in a sustainable way and recognizing that competitive markets also have an enormous potential to mobilize private resources and stimulate innovation.

Recognize the significant progress that has been made in recent years by a number of business sectors and leading companies and support the scaling up of such efforts across other business sectors in Europe and abroad.

Acknowledge the primary need to promote an even greater awareness of the importance of biodiversity throughout the business sector as well as among consumers, to make knowledge, information and relevant expertise available to business and to assist companies in shaping their commitments to biodiversity.

Recognize that there is an urgent need to promote biodiversity conservation in micro, small and medium sized enterprises, and in particular those with a strong link to biodiversity conservation as well as those based in the rural economy and to provide them with the information, relevant expertise and tools which are adapted to the operating conditions of these enterprises and recognizing also the valuable role that business associations can play in this process as well as the potential value of clusters of interest groups working within the context of specific, physical landscapes.

Encourage the incorporation of biodiversity considerations into existing responsibility schemes and the implementation of such schemes in combination with other approaches (e.g. market mechanisms, regulatory frameworks). Improvements in the understanding of biodiversity and ecosystem services through research and practical experience should support the evolution of business contribution to biodiversity so as to engage businesses in a process of continuous improvement.

Welcome the progress made in biodiversity performance assessment and reporting by several leading business which complement the regulatory assessment schemes such as those established within the EU under the Habitats Directive, the Environmental Impact Assessment and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directives.

Encourage establishing and strengthening public/private partnerships between and among local, regional and national governments, NGOs, business and academia to fight biodiversity loss as well as the development of mechanisms by which these stakeholders and other relevant groups can identify each other with a view to developing practical, operational partnerships.

Recommend the development and testing of market-based approaches for biodiversity, learning from the approaches and models which have been implemented in connection with climate change related instruments.

Recognize the need to promote the principle of a level playing field at a global level in order to provide the correct incentives and signals to those companies

that are taking active steps to conserve biodiversity and practice sustainable use and recognizing also that the EU could play a significant role in this context.

Welcome within the context of the EU's objective of halting biodiversity loss by 2010, the launching by the Portuguese Presidency of the EU Business and Biodiversity Initiative and the commitment from the EU Commission to establish a technical facility to support this initiative.

Welcome and congratulate the government of Portugal for identifying business and biodiversity as a priority during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU and, in particular, for providing a new approach by engaging the business sector in the biodiversity agenda through a high-level multi-stakeholder conference on the subject.

Welcome also the German efforts to advance business and biodiversity agenda in preparation of CBD COP-9 and the actions taken by Slovenia in its capacity as the next EU Presidency in continuing to support this agenda.

Invite the Portuguese EU Presidency to transmit the Message from Lisbon on Business and Biodiversity to the EU Summit in December 2007 and to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity to be held in Bonn in May 2008, including its High-level Segment and the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008.

Express our gratitude to the government of Portugal for hosting this conference with the support of the European Commission and IUCN's Countdown 2010 initiative.

