

Landmark decisions at biodiversity conference are a big step forward in protecting global biodiversity

191 countries have agreed today to take far reaching action in order to address the current unprecedented loss of biodiversity across the globe. At the 9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which has been meeting for the past two weeks in Bonn Germany, consensus was reached on decisions, which will pave the way to ensuring that the increasing production of biofuels is sustainable and to finalising an international regime on access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources. These decisions will also lead to protecting vulnerable biodiversity in the high seas and to ensuring that concerns relating to biodiversity and forests are taken up in the ongoing climate change negotiations. As a result of today's agreement, governments will take concrete actions towards reaching the global target of significantly reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

Commissioner Dimas said: "Today, we have reached a milestone in protecting our biodiversity by finally putting our commitments into concrete actions. As a result of this agreement governments will be able to take concrete action towards halting the loss of biodiversity. I laud the outstanding leadership of the German Presidency of the conference in reaching these ambitious outcomes. I'm also pleased about the role that the EU played in forging this agreement".

The Conference of the Parties reached a significant agreement on biofuels, which, for the first time on a global level, establishes that the production and use of biofuels should be sustainable in relation to biodiversity. The agreement will now allow for international work to develop more specific guidance for the development of sustainability criteria.

A major step forward has been taken with a view to reaching the global target of establishing a global network of marine protected areas by 2012. The Conference adopted scientific criteria for the identification of marine areas in need of protection. Importantly the Conference also agreed that, in support of the United Nations General Assembly, work will also be done to identify marine areas that meet the criteria and to provide guidance for the assessment of environmental impacts of activities undertaken in the high seas.

On biodiversity and climate change governments agreed on a process which will feed biodiversity concerns into the ongoing climate negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Conference also adopted a decision which severely limits any activity with regard to ocean fertilization.

A key achievement was reached in the ongoing negotiations of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use. The decision includes a detailed roadmap for finalising this negotiation by the tenth Conference of the Parties in 2010.

Another breakthrough concerns the development of an international science-policy platform on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being which should be in place by 2010. This platform will build on the successful example of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Commission is one of the lead contributors to the "Economics of Eco-system and Biodiversity Loss" study, which was presented at this Conference. This study will be an important contribution to that process.