



Brussels in Brief is a regular feature of the IUCN Newsletter produced by the **Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)** in Brussels. It provides a platform to explain the substance of environmental policy, as well as to highlight up-coming EU agenda items relevant to Europe and beyond.

Each edition of **Brussels in Brief** considers topics that relate to the overall thematic focus of the current Newsletter issue.

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Brussels in Brief

EU development cooperation and biodiversity

The EU's development policy and its objectives are based on the 1993 Maastricht Treaty. According to the Treaty, Community development policy is to support sustainable economic and social development, and to encourage poverty eradication in developing countries. Since development is a shared competence between the EU and its Member States, development cooperation within the EU is carried out through a wide range of Community and Member State initiatives and instruments.

During the last decades the emphasis of EU development policy has become increasingly aligned with international objectives and efforts in this area. Since 2000, achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has become the main goal of the European Community's development policy.

Supporting sustainable use of biodiversity will play an important role in reaching the EU's development commitments. Lack of environmental sustainability, including conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity, may seriously undermine efforts to reach the MDGs. Promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within the Community's development cooperation framework is also essential for achieving the global target of significantly reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

In order to scale-up EU development assistance (e.g. its impact and delivery) and to meet the challenges of the MDGs by 2015 both the EU's development policy and the Community framework for its implementation have undergone quite some changes during recent years. One of the main goals of this reform has been to increase the coherence and complementarity between EU and Member States' development policies and initiatives.

This issue of **Brussels in Brief** outlines the international and European policy framework for development cooperation, focusing in particular on the aspects related to environment and biodiversity. In particular, the Newsletter aims to highlight the recent and ongoing changes in the Community's development policy. The current issue also provides information on gaps in addressing sustainable management and conservation of biodiversity as a part of EU development cooperation initiatives. Finally, the Newsletter discusses the future role of biodiversity in development cooperation.

• International framework for development cooperation

Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development – current framework for development cooperation

The concept of sustainable development was brought forward in the international context by the United Nations' Brundtland Report in 1987¹. The report made the international community aware that it was urgent to begin making progress towards economic development that could be sustained without depleting natural resources or harming the environment. One of the issues the Brundtland Report was particularly concerned about was redistributing resources towards poorer nations while encouraging their economic growth.

Since its inception, the concept of sustainable development has become both a basic guideline for, and a principle objective of, development cooperation. In the context of sustainable development, the UN global conferences, including the conferences on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro and in Johannesburg (1992 and 2002), have played a key role in outlining the current worldwide objectives for development cooperation.

In September 2000 the UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration that set out eight time-bound and quantified targets for addressing the world's extreme poverty by 2015. Since their adoption these eight targets, known as the 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs), have provided the international framework for development cooperation (see Box 1).

Box 1. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

UN Millennium Development Goals:
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

As regards geographic focus, the international community has considerably increased its focus on Africa, for the African countries are facing serious difficulties in reaching the objectives set by the MDGs. In this context, increasing support to development cooperation, for Africa in particular, was one of the main goals in the annual summit of the heads of the world's leading economies in Gleneagles, Scotland in 2005 (Group of Eight - G8²). The summit agreed on measures aiming to support the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. This agreement included a commitment to double development aid by 2010 with an extra US\$50 billion worldwide and US\$25 billion for Africa. Additionally, the debts of 18 of the world's poorest countries, most of which are situated in Africa, were abated. Apart from the debt relief, the progress in reaching the Gleneagles objectives has been limited. For example, several G8 members (of which several are EU Member States) have not yet committed themselves to the funding promised.

More information on G8 summit in Gleneagles in 2005: <http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1094235520151>

Integrating environment and biodiversity into development

Environmental considerations, including aspects related to biodiversity, form an integral part of the current framework for development cooperation. The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (the 'Earth Summit') was a landmark meeting in terms of initiating the integration of environment into development issues at the international level. The summit adopted two key documents with particular relevance to the environment, namely the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the Agenda 21 Action Programme for Sustainable Development. These two documents laid down the principles and actions for sustainable development, placing environment at the centre of the concept.

Ten years later, at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, the international community further committed itself to a number of environment and development related objectives including, for example, to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity, maintain or restore depleted fish stocks and improve sustainable agricultural productivity and food security.

¹ Brundtland, G. (ed.). 1987. Our common future: The World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford, Oxford University Press.)

² The Group of Eight (G8) consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the US and the Russian Federation.

As regards the MDGs, environmental issues are addressed by the seventh goal (MDG7). MDG7 strives to ensure environmental sustainability by integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reversing loss of environmental resources. It also aims to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015 and achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

More information on the UN summits on sustainable development:

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/docs_key_conferences.htm

• EU development policy

EU development policy originates from the association of certain overseas countries and territories with the then European Economic Community upon its creation in 1957. However, it is only since the Treaty of European Union (Maastricht Treaty) came into force in 1993 that Community development cooperation obtained a specific legal basis (Articles 3 and 130 of the Maastricht Treaty).

According to the Treaty, the goal of Community development policy is to foster sustainable economic and social development of developing countries and to promote smooth and gradual integration of developing countries into the world's economy. Additionally, the Treaty states that the European Community is to encourage the campaign against poverty in developing countries. The Treaty also stipulates that the Community shall take these development objectives into account in its other policy areas that are likely to affect developing countries (Articles 177 to 181 of the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty of Maastricht).

Development is a shared competence between the EU and its Member States (See Box 2) and therefore the Treaty-based development objectives have traditionally been carried out through a number of Community and Member States initiatives and instruments, including legal (convention-based and unilateral) and financial (geographic, thematic and specific) instruments. The first common strategy for EU development policy, including principles, objectives and priority activities for Community assistance, was established in 2000³, and eradicating poverty in developing countries through sustainable development was its principle aim.

During the last decades the emphasis of EU development policy has become increasingly aligned with global efforts in this area. Consequently, the international framework for development cooperation, the MDGs in particular, now forms the thematic basis for EU development policy and cooperation.

Geographically, the EU is currently increasing its focus on supporting the development of African countries. In this context, the EU Strategy for Africa was adopted in December 2005 (COM(2005)489). The strategy suggested a framework for action for all EU Member States and the European Commission to support Africa's efforts to attain the MDGs.

Box 2. Roles of the European Community and Member States in development cooperation

The European Community and its Member States account for more than half of worldwide Official Development Assistance (ODA). In 2004 this amounted to about US\$ 43 billion. The biggest donors among the individual Member States include France, the UK and Germany (as net ODA in US\$), and Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden and the Netherlands (ODA as a share of GNI).

Development is a shared competence between the EU and its Member States. This means that EU development policy does not prevent the Member States from exercising their competence in this area but, in principle, national development policies and EU policy should complement and reinforce each other.

On the European inter-institutional level, development cooperation policy is subject to the co-decision procedure, i.e. the Parliament shares legislative power with the Council. Issues related to development are discussed by the development ministers in the General Affairs and External Relations Council. Parliament's decisions are prepared by the Committee on Development.

EU Donor Atlas 2006:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/publications/docs/eu_donor_atlas_2006.pdf#zoom=100

The new EU development policy - European Consensus on Development

On 13 July 2005 the European Commission came forward with a new initiative for development policy: 'A Proposal for a Joint Declaration by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the European Union Development Policy' (COM(2005)311).

³ Declaration of the Council and the Commission of 20 November 2000 on the European Community's development policy, based on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 26 April 2000 (COM(2000) 212)

The proposal was signed by the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament on 20 December 2005 (OJ C46/01 24.2.2006).

The Joint Declaration sets out the framework (i.e. common objectives, values and principles) for the new EU development policy and identifies target areas for Community cooperation. In principle, poverty eradication along the lines of the MDGs continues to be the main objective of the policy.

According to the Joint Declaration, the Community will be primarily active in the following thematic areas:

- trade and regional integration;
- environment and the sustainable management of natural resources;
- infrastructure, communications and transport
- water and energy;
- rural development, territorial planning, agriculture and food security;
- governance, democracy, human rights and support for economic and institutional reforms;
- conflict prevention and fragile states;
- human development; and
- social cohesion and employment.

Community framework for development cooperation

At the Community level, EU Development Policy is implemented as a part of the broader Community framework for external assistance. The objectives of the policy are put into practice through a wide range of legal and financial instruments. For example, specific budget lines have been established to support the integration of an environmental dimension in development processes (Regulation 2493/2000) and to promote conservation and sustainable management of forests in developing countries (Regulation 2494/2000).

During recent years the European Commission has been aiming to improve the effectiveness of EU development cooperation by simplifying the framework of Community external assistance, e.g. instruments delivering EU development cooperation (Communication to the Commission, 16 May 2000). In 2007, a number of current Community instruments for development cooperation expire. The intention is to replace the current range of geographical and thematic instruments by a single framework comprising six instruments, two of which are particularly dedicated to the EU development and economic cooperation (COM(2004)626) and cooperation with the EU neighbouring countries (COM(2004)628).

Since 2001, the programming of EU development cooperation and external assistance has been based on partnerships with developing countries (EU partner

countries) carried out within a framework of Country and Regional Strategy Papers (CSPs/RSPs) (See Box 3). These geographical programmes are to remain privileged instruments for cooperation with third countries under the simplified framework. However, the instruments for external assistance are to deliver a number of new thematic programmes providing extra benefits to the geographically- focused initiatives (COM(2005)324).

Box 3. Country and Regional Strategy Papers – the basis for programming the EU development cooperation

Within the partnership framework the focus of development cooperation and assistance in an individual country or region is defined by Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and Regional Strategy Papers (RSPs) developed by the EU partner countries.

The strategy documents are complemented by National or Regional Indicative Programmes (NIPs/RIPs) indicating the areas where resources will be spent over a given number of years and the amount of funds to be allocated. Together, the CSPs/RSPs and NIPs/RIPs form the basis for so called EU geographic cooperation.

One of the formal requirements for CSPs and RSPs, although not a legal obligation, is the development of Country Environmental Profiles (CEPs) that provide an analysis of the environmental, social and economic situation within a country/region.

Additionally, in March 2006 the European Commission proposed a package on aid effectiveness that proposes concrete measures to improve the efficiency of EU development aid and external assistance (COM(2006)87, COM(2006)85 and COM(2006)88). Among other things this aid effectiveness package proposed the establishment of future joint programming of European aid between the Commission and the Member States.

More information on the reform of the EU external assistance:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/reform/intro/index.htm

Joint submission from environmental organisations regarding the proposed thematic programme:

http://www.climnet.org/EUenergy/development/JointNGOSubmission_EC%20thematic.pdf

• Integrating environment and biodiversity into the EU development policy

The obligation to integrate environmental protection into all Community policies, including development policy, is included in the Maastricht Treaty (Article 6). The Cardiff Process of environmental integration⁴ initiated in 1998 launched the integration of environment into the development policy in practice. Consequently, since the beginning of the 21st century, environmental concerns, including conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, have been identified as a crosscutting issue that is to be mainstreamed to all EU development cooperation activities⁵.

Environment remains as one of the cross-cutting issues within the new development policy. Additionally, the Joint Declaration on the European Union Development Policy also identifies environment and sustainable management of natural resources as one of the primary areas of Community action. According to the declaration, the Community will support efforts undertaken by its partner countries to incorporate environmental considerations into development and help to increase their capacity to implement multilateral environmental agreements.

Environment and sustainable management of natural resources is one of the planned areas for future thematic programmes within the Community framework for development cooperation (COM(2006)20). The proposed Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (COM(2005)324) addresses the environmental dimension of development and other external policies, and promotes the EU's environmental and energy policies abroad. The programme replaces former provisions to integrate environmental issues into Community development cooperation.

As regards EU biodiversity policy, some mention of development cooperation was already included in the EU's 5th Environmental Action Programme. However, the current, 6th Environmental Action Programme (2001-2010) explicitly states that in order to protect and restore natural systems and halt the loss of biodiversity both in the EU and global level, nature conservation and biodiversity should be integrated into

the EU's commercial and development cooperation policies. As a result, in 2001 the Commission prepared a Biodiversity Action Plan on Economic Cooperation and Development as a part of the 1998 EC Biodiversity Strategy (COM/2001/162) (see Box 4). Since its adoption, the objectives of this Action Plan have aimed to form a part of the EU development cooperation and external assistance.

Box 4. Biodiversity Action Plan for Economic and Development Co-operation

The Biodiversity Action Plan for Economic and Development Co-operation (BAP-EDC) (COM(2001)162) was adopted in 2001. This BAP-EDC is one of the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP) established and implemented under the 1998 EU Biodiversity Strategy (COM(98)42).

The underlying objective of the BAP-EDC is to reverse the loss of biodiversity and environmental resources in developing countries while reducing poverty.

The BAP-EDC sets out a framework for development cooperation actions and establishes some guiding principles that should be followed, e.g., the application of ecosystem approach, stakeholder participation, sharing the costs and benefits from biodiversity conservation and giving the public access to information.

The BAP-EDC also emphasises the need to improve the capacity of developing countries for biodiversity-related research, and sharing information, collections and technology. Another important field of action is education and awareness-raising to broaden the understanding of the importance of biodiversity for health and well-being.

The 2004 review of the BAP-EDC found that the implementation of the BAP-EDC has been generally poor and the Plan had not been very effective in influencing policy, programmes and projects. In particular, the mainstreaming of biodiversity objectives into other (non-environment) sectors was found to be 'exceptionally disappointing'.

AP for Economic and Development Co-operation:
<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/act0162en02/5.pdf>

Assessment of BAP-EDC Implementation:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/biodiversity/develop_biodiversity_policy/malahide_conference/pdf/malahide_wgp_audit_4.pdf

⁴ Cardiff Process is the name given to the process launched by the European Council at its meeting in Cardiff in June 1998 requiring different Council formations to integrate environmental considerations into their respective activities.

⁵ Relevant documents include European Commission Strategy on Integrating the Environment into EC Economic and Development Cooperation (SEC(2001)609) and Commission Communication 'Towards a global partnership for sustainable development' (COM(2002)82)

The Commission Communication on 'Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 and Beyond', accompanied by an EU Action Plan on Biodiversity, was published in

May 2006 (COM(2006)/216). In addition to safeguarding biodiversity within the EU, the Communication also puts a strong emphasis on global biodiversity issues. Consequently, the Biodiversity Action Plan includes a number of actions that aim to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in third countries and improve the overall integration of biodiversity into the Community's development cooperation and external assistance (Action Plan, Policy Area 2, Objective 7).

Specific biodiversity related provisions within the current EU development policy and upcoming framework for EU development cooperation are summarised in Box 5.

- **Cooperation with the ACP countries and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)**

Reflecting European history, relations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP countries) are a particularly important aspect of EU development policy and, also more widely, of its external action. The EU has also a number of Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) that depend constitutionally on four Member States of the European Community (Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the UK) but which do not form part of Community territory. Additionally, the EU has altogether seven Outermost Regions⁵ that, unlike the OCTs, are a part of the European Union but whose distinctive characteristics qualify them for special treatment in various sectors.

Since the year 2000, the Cotonou Agreement has provided a framework for development cooperation between the EU and the ACP states. The agreement replaced the Lomé Convention, which laid down the basis for the EU-APC cooperation during 1975-2000. The main objective of the Cotonou Agreement is to reduce poverty, consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the integration of the ACP countries into the world economy. The agreement also encourages political dialogue between the EU and the ACP states and gives provisions for economic cooperation and trade.

The EC Treaty provides the legal basis for the relations between the European Community and both the OCTs and Outermost Regions (Articles 182 to 188 and Article 299 respectively). According to the Treaty, the purpose of the OCT relations is to promote the economic and social development of the OCTs, and to establish

close economic relations between these areas and the Community as a whole. In principle, the provisions of the Treaty are implemented by the Council 'Overseas Association Decision' (Council Decision 2001/822).

The European Development Fund (EDF) is the main instrument for Community aid for development cooperation in the ACP countries and OCTs. The EDF does not come under the general Community budget but is funded by the Member States and covered by its own financial rules. In comparison, the Outermost Regions are eligible for support measures under Community funds aiming to improve the cohesion within the Union (e.g. Regional Development and Social Funds and the Cohesion Fund).

ACPs, OCTs and the environment

Both the Cotonou Agreement and the OCT Overseas Association Decision include references to the environment. For example, the Cotonou Agreement stipulates that the principles of sustainable management of natural resources and the environment shall be applied and integrated at every level of the EU-ACP partnership (Article 1). Environment is also identified as one of the areas for cooperation between the EU and both ACPs and OCTs.

Additionally, the 2005 EU Strategy for Africa also addresses issues related to sustainable environmental management in the African countries including, in particular, combating desertification and responding to the effects of climate change.

More information on the Cotonou Agreement:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/cotonou/index_en.htm

More information on the provisions for the OCTs:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/oct/index_en.htm

- **EU Neighbourhood Policy**

The cooperation between the EU and its neighbouring states takes place within the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (e.g. (COM(2004)373). The Policy was established in 2003-2004 and was designed to give new impetus to cooperation with the countries neighbouring the EU following the 2004 enlargement. The ENP aims to provide the EU neighbour states with an improved opportunity to benefit from the EU internal market and to participate in relevant Community programmes.

⁶ Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Réunion, the Azores, the Canaries and Madeira

The ENP applies to southern and eastern neighbouring countries as well as the countries⁷ in the North of the EU that are part of the Northern Dimension. Additionally, Russia is part of the ENP regional dimension⁸ but also maintains a separate bilateral dialogue with the EU.

The ENP Strategy Paper (COM(2004)373) sets out the overall context and guidelines for the policy. The specific areas for cooperation are defined in country specific ENP Action Plans that are mutually agreed between the EU and each partner state. These action plans set out a more detailed agenda of political and economic reforms in the partner countries.

At present, Community assistance to the countries included in the ENP is provided under various geographical programmes and thematic programmes. In the future, ENP initiatives and projects will be carried out via the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (COM(2004) 628), which should enter into force in 2007.

Environmental protection forms one of the ENP priorities for action and references to environment are systematically included in the existing country actions plans. However, no specific reference to issues related to biodiversity is included in the ENP Strategy Paper or in the proposed European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and only few countries have included conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as a specific theme in their ENP action plans.

More information on the EU Neighbourhood Policy: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm

Box 5. Main instruments to address biodiversity within the current and upcoming EU framework for development cooperation

General framework

Joint Statement on the European Union Development Policy

- Supports the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in developing countries in order to halt the loss of biodiversity and promote biosafety and sustainable management of biodiversity

EU Strategy for Africa

- Aims to assist Africa to protect its environment though, for example, sustainable management and conservation of biodiversity

Cotonou agreement

- Identifies the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems as an area for EU-ACP cooperation (Article 22)

OCT 'Overseas Association Decision'

- Identifies conservation, sustainable use and management of biodiversity as one of the fields of cooperation (Article 15)

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

- Issues related to biodiversity can be addressed as a part of the cooperation within the ENP framework

Biodiversity Action Plan for Economic and Development Co-operation (BAP-EDC)

Communication on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 and beyond and the accompanied Biodiversity Action Plan

General framework

Country and Regional Strategy Papers (CSPs/RSPs)

- Biodiversity related aspects can be addressed in the context of Country Environmental Profiles (CEPs)

Suggested Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy supports, for example

- Initiatives contributing to the 2010 target on significantly reducing biodiversity loss, especially in areas of high biodiversity
- Measures based on the BAP-EDC
- Capacity building on bio-safety

⁷ Algeria, Belarus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

⁸ Norway, Iceland and Russia

• **Problems in addressing biodiversity within EU development cooperation**

Struggling to mainstream the environment

It has been recognised that the difficulties in mainstreaming the environment, including biodiversity-related aspects, into development cooperation and external policy making have been one of the main barriers for the EU to achieve its global commitments on sustainable development. For example, in 2002 an EC review of sixty CSPs and seven RSPs revealed a low level of integration of environmental issues⁹. A 2003 report of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly also indicated that the EC had inadequately mainstreamed environmental issues into development assistance¹⁰.

In July 2006, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published a special report on the management and inclusion of environmental issues in the Commission's development assistance. The Court's report supported earlier reviews in concluding that the Commission had not adequately managed to integrate environmental aspects into its development cooperation activities. The report also identified several other shortcomings including, for example, a lack of assessing and monitoring the environmental impacts of development cooperation projects and programmes. Additionally, the ECA observed that not enough attention had been given to training of staff on environmental issues. For instance, both the establishment of an internal environmental helpdesk and the publication of an environmental integration manual had been significantly delayed.

The exclusion of potentially important environmental considerations from country/regional programmes could be due to several reasons. As the programmes are developed in partnership between the EU and the partner countries, the content of the programmes depends significantly on the partner countries' national priorities, and these may not put a lot of emphasis on the environment. Environmental issues also often cut across country borders making it difficult to address them adequately in a strict national context. Additionally, the participation of rural communities in developing national priorities in third countries is often very limited, even though these communities can have a strong interest in improving/safeguarding their local environment.

Moreover, guidelines for environmental integration, both in the Commission headquarters and overseas delegations and in third countries, might be inadequate or lacking (see above). Existing guidelines often do not sufficiently highlight the role of natural resources in economic growth and poverty reduction. For example, the links between environment and poverty (e.g. land tenure and land use rights), and natural resources and conflicts could be better addressed.

In this context, the Commission recently published a Communication on Policy Coherence for Development (COM(2005)134). The Communication identified priority areas where attaining synergies with development policy objectives was considered particularly relevant, e.g. in relation to trade, environment, agriculture, fisheries and energy. For each of these priority areas the Communication defined general orientations contributing to a possible acceleration of progress towards the MDGs. The objectives of the Communication were confirmed by the Council in May 2005 and they were carried forward in the European Consensus on Development.

European Court of Auditors Special Report No 6/2006: The environmental aspects of the Commission's development cooperation together with the Commission's replies:

http://www.eca.europa.eu/audit_reports/special_reports/docs/2006/rs06_06en.pdf

Difficulties in addressing biodiversity-related concerns

The low level of integration, together with a limited number of projects with a clear environmental focus, has also hampered attempts to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within EU development cooperation activities (See Box 3). Additionally, the ECA conclusions indicate that even though the Commission-financed projects on biodiversity have been relevant to the needs of the beneficiary countries, they have often fallen short in delivering long term sustainability and creating positive effects outside the actual project.

The lack of environmental integration has also resulted in a lack of regard for the negative effects of development initiatives on biodiversity. For example, the Community's development and energy policies both support the battle against climate change and production of clean and renewable energy, e.g. biofuels, in developing countries. However, the possible negative impacts of biofuel production on biodiversity are often not fully considered. Although the proposal for the EU biomass action plan (COM(2005)628) acknowledges

⁹ Dávalos, M. E. 2002. Mainstreaming Environment in the Country Strategy Papers: a review of 60 countries. DG Development, European Commission. Brussels.

¹⁰ ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. 2003. Report on sustainable management and conservation of natural resources in ACP countries in the context of the 9th EDF programme. Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment (ACP-EU 3590/03)

that the expansion of vegetable oil production in developing countries could increase the rate of deforestation, the plan does not, for example, address any risks associated with the application of monocultures and of potentially invasive exotic species as a source for renewable energy.

• Discussion and future developments

More coherence, efficiency and cooperation – potentially good news for environment and biodiversity

The new EU development policy provides a clear and renewed basis for integrating environmental aspects into the Community's development cooperation. This further supports mainstreaming biodiversity related aspects into EU development cooperation activities, both on the side of partner countries and the EU. The policy also makes environment a priority field for Community action, offering the possibility to strengthen and upscale EU initiatives on conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity as a part of its development cooperation.

As regards the refined Community framework for development cooperation, the new multi-annual environmental thematic programme can help to ensure that the fundamental issues related to environment/biodiversity and poverty reduction will be tackled even though they may have not been included in CSPs or RSPs. It is, however, imperative to assure that the thematic programme does not replace efforts to ensure the integration of environmental concerns into geographic programming. In this context, the CEPs/REPs can provide a good tool to highlight the importance of environment, including undertaking specific actions for biodiversity, with regards to the direct and indirect benefits to rural communities.

The new development policy and refined framework for development cooperation will also assist in managing and coordinating the Community programmes and actions on environment and biodiversity in a more strategic manner. In addition, the Commission also aims to launch an interservice steering group tasked to provide guidance for integrating environment into development cooperation and to ensure better coordination between Community actions (ECA report 2006).

The Commission's aid effectiveness package may also pave the way for future joint programming of European aid between the Commission and the Member States. Improved programming within the Commission and coordination between the Commission and

the Member States may help to ensure that high quality environmental integration takes place throughout programming. Within this framework it will be also possible to address biodiversity-related concerns in a more coordinated manner.

In April 2006 the Council of Development Ministers gave a cautious green light to the new joint programming framework. However, some Member States still have reservations about the common programming fearing that the new arrangements might compromise their existing national and international frameworks. The discussions on the joint framework will continue during 2006.

Additionally, a conference on biodiversity in European development cooperation will be held in Paris in September 2006¹¹. The conference is organised jointly by IUCN, the European Commission and several Member States. The aim of the conference is to develop recommendations for the Commission and Member States on how to address the integration of biodiversity concerns into development cooperation programmes and policies. It is anticipated that the partnership between the EC, IUCN and Member States, established through the conference will contribute to promoting greater coherence of policies and incorporation of biodiversity and environment in development programmes in the future.

A renewed Commission strategy for integrating environment into development cooperation

The recent ECA report included several recommendations to address the shortcomings in dealing with environmental issues in the Commission's development cooperation. Among others, the report recommended that the Commission should establish a comprehensive strategy to address the environmental aspects of its development aid, including setting up a new operational framework for the implementation and monitoring of the strategy.

As a response to the report, the Commission has now outlined several ongoing/planned actions that aim to address the shortcomings identified by the audit¹². Among others, the Commission has committed itself to review and update its current strategy for environmental integration⁵ with a view to making it more comprehensive.

¹¹ Conference on biodiversity in European development cooperation: <http://countdown2010.net/paris2006/index.html>

¹² The Commission response can be found in the end of ECA report

In general, the ECA audit findings and the Commission's response can be seen as an important contribution to improving the integration of environmental considerations, including biodiversity, into EU development aid and external assistance. However, it is still to be seen how quickly, the Commission will progress in carrying out the outlined actions.

The role of EU Biodiversity Policy

Promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within the EU's development cooperation framework is also essential for achieving the global target of significantly reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. Additionally, supporting the conservation of biodiversity in the Community's Outermost Regions can considerably contribute to reaching the EU objective of halting the loss of biodiversity on its own territory by 2010.

The Commission Communication and Action Plan on Biodiversity (COM(2006)216) represents a comprehensive Community policy for biodiversity conservation, including actions aiming to improve the integration of biodiversity into EU development cooperation and external assistance. However, as with other existing policies related to biodiversity, the implementation of this new Action Plan faces a risk of being under-resourced and lacking in political impetus. Therefore, it will be interesting to see how the Communication is received by the Council and the Parliament as high-level political endorsement may considerably enhance its chances of success.

Future challenges

It is clear that addressing biodiversity as an integral part of Community's development cooperation should play an important role in reaching the EU's international commitments on sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability (MDG7) is an underlying element supporting the other Goals. Therefore, the lack of environmental sustainability and progress in reaching MDG7 may undermine efforts to reach other MDGs.

There is still, however, a strong need to improve both the effectiveness of environment/biodiversity related development projects and the integration of environment/biodiversity in all of the Community's development initiatives and other related policies. It can be seen that the current EU development policy and the refined Community framework for development

cooperation and external assistance provide several opportunities to address these issues. However, the future challenges lie in taking up these opportunities in a coherent and comprehensive manner.

¹³For example: Task Force on Environmental Sustainability (2005) Environment and human well-being: a practical strategy (http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf_environment.htm)