



To
Council of Europe
President Herman Van Rompuy
President of the European Council
Rue de la loi 175
1048 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 5 February 2010

Dear President Van Rompuy,

There are two political initiatives which are converging at the same time at the European Council of Heads of State and Government in March. The first is the debate on the EU 2020 Strategy. The other is the decision about the future of biodiversity policy and the new targets to replace the 2010 target of halting the loss of biodiversity. We believe these two policy initiatives are inextricably linked for the reasons outlined below. Therefore the **EU 2020 strategy should stress the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems as a priority objective** and should establish these as a clear condition for future economic and social development.

Biodiversity and healthy and functioning ecosystems represent the world's "natural capital" and provide the renewable raw materials and ecological services which are at the heart of a sustainable and resilient economy. The maintenance, protection and restoration of ecosystems are also providing essential and highly cost-effective ways for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

According to the findings of the "*The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity*" study, initiated by the G8+5 environment ministers, the continuous loss of biodiversity will cost the world at least 7 % of the GDP in 2050 under a business as usual scenario. The costs of policy inaction for Europe are estimated to be at least 1.1 trillion per year in 2050 (relative to 2000)¹. Many of these costs will have to be borne well before 2050.

¹ L. Braat and P. ten Brink (2007) *The Cost of Policy Inaction - The case of not meeting the 2010 biodiversity target*. Chapter 6: The costs of policy inaction in monetary terms.

As mentioned in the Commission staff working document dated 2 February 2010, summarizing stakeholder feedback on the draft EU 2020 Strategy, around “half of the Member States explicitly endorse the strong links between economic, environmental and social pillars”. Responses from EU citizens show that “increased environmental protection” is a widely supported goal for the European Union².

We therefore urge you to give your fullest support to the development of a strong EU post 2010 biodiversity target³ and policy. The new EU 2020 biodiversity target should be one of the central pillars of the EU 2020 strategy. This would confirm to its citizens and the global community that the EU is strongly committed to sustainable development, respecting the fundamental biophysical limits of our planet.


Yours sincerely,



Angelo Caserta,
Regional Director BirdLife International



John Hontelez,
EEB Secretary General



Tony Long,
Director WWF European Policy Office



Hans Friederich
IUCN
Regional Director for Pan-Europe

as from: WWF European Policy Office, Avenue de Tervurenlaan Box 20, 1150 Brussels

² Europe 2020 – public consultation, First overview of responses Brussels, 2.2.2010, SEC(2010)116final

³ Proposed NGO headline target for the EU post 2010 biodiversity strategy „Halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functionality and resilience in the EU by 2020, make significant progress in their restoration and substantially increase the EU’s contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. The European species and habitats of special conservation interests should reach a favourable conservation status by 2020.”