

Ladies and Gentleman, Dear Participants,

First of all, on behalf of the Hungarian Minister of Environment I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the Spanish Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs for the warm welcome and for hosting this conference. I am pleased to forward his best wishes and congratulation to all of you.

The previous speakers have already said a lot about the history of the 2010 biodiversity target, and we have also heard the Commission's options for the EU biodiversity target beyond 2010.

In my view, before starting to discuss our future aims, we have to answer **what the shortcomings** are in our current policies.

The short-term & short-sighted economic interests of several sectors several times contradict biodiversity conservation because they result in bad land-use practices, overexploitation, habitat-consuming investments and intensively managed lands.

- **Agriculture:** Despite the some very good initiatives in the agricultural sector, these efforts are not yet sufficient enough for biodiversity conservation.
- **Forestry:** Although in some European countries forestry is done in a sustainable manner, it is not a general situation for the entire Europe, and specifically not the case in Central-Eastern European countries.
- **Water:** Despite the well-defined EU environmental objectives for water management, the reality is alarmingly different when looking at for example the case of the River Danube: Do we aim at a Living Danube or converting it into a navigation channel? Do we convert the Danube to fit the needs of navigation or the other way round: we convert navigation to fit the Danube?
- **Protected areas:** Although one-fifth of the EU's territory belongs to the Natura 2000 network, many of these areas are not managed properly.
- Let's just consider **financing**. For 2010 the total EU budget is approximately 141 billion Euro. While, great percentage go for development projects and large-scale investments, the EU budget does not contain a separate budget line allocated for the maintenance and management of protected areas and nature conservation actions.

What do we see as a solution?

To solve the above mentioned problems, namely:

- I think it is undoubted that the good ecological status of protected areas is essential. Therefore in my view a targeted EU budget line would be necessary for the maintenance of protected areas.
- In addition to this, integration of biodiversity aspects into all relevant sector is another key issue. For instance, if we were able to achieve that the European development and investment projects – either inside or outside our continent – would be implemented in a biodiversity-friendly way, the nature would benefit enormously.

I believe that concrete actions need to be started or restarted at the national level.

Finally, I know, there have been great expectations about the 2010 target which we have not fulfilled. As for me, I remain optimistic that if we are able to realize the previously mentioned actions, our efforts will bear fruits, hopefully not later than 2020.

Thank you very much for your attention.