

SEBI 2010 - Streamlining European Biodiversity Indicators

European Commission

This European Community hosted side event discussed the results of Phase 1 of the "Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI 2010)" project. Building upon the framework for indicators adopted at CBD COP7, the SEBI 2010 project was set up in 2005 to select and develop a set of indicators to measure progress towards the European target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010. A first set of these European indicators is now being proposed, which concludes the first phase of SEBI 2010.

Gordon McInnes (European Environment Agency) presented the history of SEBI 2010 and the work to date. He illustrated several key indicators from the set, and emphasised the close link of SEBI 2010 to policy processes at the pan-European level. Mr McInnes also outlined plans for future SEBI 2010 work. The next milestone will be the publication of an indicator based assessment based on the set, to be published in 2008.

Anne Teller (European Commission, Directorate General for Environment) emphasised the importance of SEBI 2010 in supporting EU biodiversity policy, and especially the European Commission's Communication on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity to 2010 and Beyond (COM(2006)216 final). The Commission will use the SEBI 2010 set of indicators when reporting on progress with the action plan annexed to the Communication.

Finally, Ivonne Higuero (UNEP/PEBLDS) explained how SEBI 2010 has a pan-European scope, and highlighted the important biodiversity-related work going on in the EECCA countries (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia), as well as challenges related to data flows.

Questions from the audience showed interest in the indicators and future assessments and related to the following points:

- Assessment: participants were keen to see more results based on the set - and were informed that that is what the 2008 indicator based assessment would deliver.
- Footprint of Europe: the inclusion of the ecological footprint to measure potential impacts on biodiversity outside Europe was welcomed.
- The use of Important Bird Areas to inform the designation of "Special Protection Areas" under the EU Birds Directive was discussed.
- Linkages to other regional and global activities on biodiversity indicators for 2010: formal links between SEBI 2010 and the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (2010 BIP) were mentioned, as well as potential links with 2010 assessments under the Bern Convention, monitoring in Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage sites, and other global processes (e.g. Long Term Ecological Research networks). The SEBI 2010 partners assured that they would continue to share progress and experience with the CBD Secretariat and other CBD Parties and raise awareness.

- Data quality: there may be issues with some of the indicators regarding data quality or sensitivity. This is acknowledged, but the set contains what are according to the SEBI 2010 process the best indicators available now, and this does not exclude future improvements of individual indicators or the set as a whole. The panellists also emphasised that SEBI 2010 has borrowed indicators from other processes such as MCPFE (the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe) and IRENA (“Indicator reporting on the integration of environmental concerns into agricultural policy”), to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Monitoring: SEBI 2010 could also try to drive more explicitly research and indicator development. This was acknowledged by the panel, but SEBI 2010 was originally set up to use existing indicators, not to design new monitoring schemes. Where SEBI 2010 encourages additional data collection (e.g. to fill geographical gaps), issues of funding (e.g. for monitoring) would need to be resolved. Research funding is traditionally not used for routine monitoring.