

Belgium – Financing International Cooperation



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The Belgian Government is strongly committed to the principles and guidelines contained in the Declaration of Rio of 1992. The contribution to the conservation of biodiversity is an important aspect of the cooperation policy, both in the form of scientific cooperation as well as through bilateral and multilateral channels. Belgium also adheres to a coordinated approach of donor countries, as reflected by its participation in the European Union and the OECD. Considering the worldwide dimension of the loss of biodiversity, only a well-coordinated strategy at international level stands a chance of success.

In recent years, the Belgian international cooperation policy underwent major legislative changes and administrative reforms that resulted in a new legal framework in 1999. The environment was selected as one of the three priority cross-sectoral themes, together with social economy and gender. In this reform, bilateral cooperation was reoriented in order to focus on 25 countries (see <http://www.dgic.be/>). This concentration of efforts is seen as an important step towards establishing longer-lasting relationships involving a more important financial contribution. Since 1997 indirect cooperation has also been the subject of reforms, with the aim to give greater responsibility to all the cooperation actors.

The Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIC), the Belgian federal cooperation agency, has a long tradition of support of development cooperation via international bodies such as GEF, UNEP, UNESCO, World Bank, CGIAR, CBD, UNCCD, etc. Some programmes to which the money is allocated are directly related to biodiversity, such as the 'Regional Environmental Information Management Project' in the Central African Region, a project which aims at improving the management of natural resources, or the UNESCO programme "Biodiversity Conservation in Regions of armed conflict" which supports the conservation of 5 protected areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Other examples include the 'Monitoring of Illegal Killings of Elephants' project in the framework of CITES and the 'Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities' by UNEP. The Belgian cooperation is also active in the field of agro-biodiversity conservation and hosts the main international germplasm collection of banana and plantain.

Through its efforts of mainstreaming the environment, DGIC has the objective to increase the pertinence of all interventions for environmental issues. An environmental policy strategy is currently being developed and will emphasize biodiversity conservation as one of the priority themes.

Inter-governmental cooperation is carried out by the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC). The consideration of biodiversity is often included as a requisite in sustainable development projects, such as the "Support to the District Forestry Development Programme" in Kenya. The DGIC finances non-governmental cooperation initiatives, known as indirect cooperation, through

outline agreements that focus on five-year programmes. Indirect co-operation currently concerns 123 recognized NGOs as well as associations, universities and scientific institutions. One of the intervention areas is sustainable rural development, for which biodiversity is taken into account in several reforestation and agro-forestry projects in the Philippines, Burkina Faso, Ecuador and other partner countries.

As a direct support to the CBD, DGIC finances the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) Partnership, an initiative from the Belgian CHM to host temporarily partner countries websites until they can be repatriated on national servers and to offer training courses on the building and maintenance of those websites. The websites of 7 African partner countries are already operational, while 4 more are in preparation.