

Message by the Federal Environment Minister, Dr. Norbert Röttgen, for the International Year of Biodiversity

The loss of biological diversity stands alongside climate change as one of the most pressing areas of global policy, and is thus one of the crucial challenges of our time.

But even though we are aware of this loss and are committed to combating it at national, regional and international level, biodiversity – the wealth of our planet – continues to disappear at a dramatic rate worldwide.

I believe that the United Nations' declaration of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity will help increase public awareness throughout the world for the many facets of biodiversity and integrate this issue in key political and social processes.

A host of events taking place in 2010 offer excellent opportunities for this:

In addition to the expert discussions within the CBD, biodiversity will be addressed by environment ministers at the special session of the UNEP Governing Council, and later by heads of state and government in the special session of the UN General Assembly.

We will have achieved an important objective if, by the end of 2010, the immense significance of biodiversity conservation for human welfare, global economic development and poverty reduction has been recognised and is consistently reflected in our political actions.

But sound and responsible management of the resources provided by our Earth cannot be restricted to policy makers or intergovernmental conventions. It is a task that concerns every one of us. We must all accept joint responsibility. Only the concerted efforts of science, media, private industry, citizens, NGOs and government actors will enable us to take the steps needed to halt the erosion of our natural foundations of life.

Conserving the Earth's biological diversity for future generations, so that they too can witness at first hand the diversity, beauty and benefits of nature, is a key concern for me. We can only preserve the planet for the good of our children if we think beyond our own lifetime. It is a question of safeguarding the essential foundations of our life - as an end in itself, since these are assets for all mankind - but also to avert an ecological crisis of a magnitude that would put all economic and financial crises in the shade.