

BioSoc: the Biodiversity and Society Bulletin

Research highlights on biodiversity and society, poverty and conservation

ISSUE 9: NOVEMBER 2006

INVESTING IN NATURE: WHAT ROLE FOR BIODIVERSITY IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?

IUCN convened an international conference in September 2006 to explore how best to address biodiversity conservation within the current European framework for development cooperation. Hosted by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs the conference was unusual, for a biodiversity gathering, in its high level of participation by officials from European development cooperation agencies alongside the more typical NGO audience.

NGOs have long bemoaned the apparent demise of biodiversity within bilateral aid programmes and have, time and again, tried to reassert the case for investing in nature. The Conference paid due attention to the contribution biodiversity makes to poor people's livelihoods but also tried to get to grips with the realities of aid architecture, the new modalities for delivering development assistance and the real constraints posed to biodiversity funding. European donor agencies have signed up to the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005) through which they are committed to enhanced aid effectiveness, coherence and coordination. The Declaration emphasises a common framework for development at the country level – to which individual donors contribute in a coordinated manner, with an emphasis on *partner country leadership over the national development strategy*. In line with this country-led approach, donors are moving increasingly away from channelling funds via projects with more and more aid being delivered through Direct Budget Support. This can take the form of a general contribution to the central treasury or to sector-specific programmes. Overall this means that it is not for donor agencies to push a biodiversity agenda, but rather to develop country and regional strategies and implementation plans that respond to the partner countries' priorities.

Nevertheless there are actions that donors can take to enhance biodiversity outcomes even within this apparently restrictive framework. The *Message from Paris* - a consensus document developed by conference participants includes a set of recommendations highlighting three main priorities:

1. supporting partner countries to better mainstream biodiversity into national and sectoral development plans;
2. improving governance by supporting policies and institutions that recognise the rights of local communities to sustainably manage biodiversity and encouraging civil society participation in national priority-setting processes;
3. ensuring that aid policies do not undermine biodiversity conservation through the better use of tools such as strategic environmental assessment and greater attention to policy coherence.

The sub-title of the Message from Paris is *From Commitments to Action*. In due course the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council will produce a set of Conclusions responding to the Message, which Member States will be asked to agree to. The Commitments will be there – whether the Action will follow is, of course, another question altogether....

SOURCE

The Message from Paris can be downloaded from the conference website:

<http://www.countdown2010.net/paris2006/>

The site also includes a summary of the conference proceedings from IISD Reporting Services and a Background Paper (both available in French, English and Spanish).

Please direct queries or comments to the IUCN Regional Director for Europe: tamas.marghescu@iucn.org
Hard copies of the background paper can be obtained from the IUCN Regional Office for Europe
www.iucneurope.org. Contact Catherine.ghyoot@iucn.org for further information.

BIOSOC

BioSoc is a new monthly email bulletin from the Poverty and Conservation Learning Group (PCLG), hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). BioSoc highlights key new research on biodiversity and society, poverty and conservation and is available in English, Spanish and French.

All issues are available online at: www.povertyandconservation.info

Please let us know about other networks that might be interested in subscribing by emailing us at: BioSoc@iied.org

POVERTY AND CONSERVATION LEARNING GROUP (PCLG)

The PCLG aims to share key information, highlight new research highlight and promote learning on poverty-conservation linkages. For more information visit: www.povertyandconservation.info

TO UNSUBSCRIBE TO BIOSOC

Please email BioSoc@iied.org with the subject heading UNSUBSCRIBE.