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Biodiversity and climate change

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1918 (2010)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has attentively considered Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1918 \(2010\)](#) on "Biodiversity and climate change". It has taken due note of the range of political and scientific measures and of the co-ordinating actions at national and international level which the Assembly proposes in this text. It has brought it to the attention of the member state governments so that they may be guided by it as necessary.
2. In this context, the Committee of Ministers stresses the relevance of the nominative framework set up to protect biodiversity by the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention). It recalls that this convention performed a pioneering role in the European initiatives on biological diversity and climate change, with the creation as early as 2006 of a Group of Experts to provide information and guidelines to the Parties in understanding the impacts and threats of climate change. The group has developed tools and gives support in developing appropriate adaptation to adapt national policies on the species and habitats protected by the Bern Convention. The approach which it has chosen is to analyse the significant links that exist between climate change and biodiversity, recalling that protection of biological diversity is an effective tool for combating the effects of climate change. The Committee of Ministers has forwarded the recommendation to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, whose comments are appended to this reply.
3. Furthermore, in the course of its work on the European Diplomas for protected areas, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention carries out regular monitoring focused especially on preservation of biodiversity of the protective and preventive actions conducted in nearly 70 protected areas spread over 26 European countries.
4. In conclusion, the Committee of Ministers draws the Assembly's attention to the activities of the European and Mediterranean Agreement on Major Hazards (EUR-OPA)² which recently adopted, at its 12th Ministerial Session held in September 2010 in St Petersburg, a recommendation on reducing vulnerability in the face of climate change.

1. adopted at the 1101st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (8 December 2010)

2. Partial Agreement on the Co-operation Group for the prevention of, protection against, and organisation of relief in major natural and technological disasters (EUR-OPA).



Appendix to the reply

Comments of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)

The Standing Committee of the Bern Convention:

1. Welcomes [Recommendation 1918 \(2010\)](#) of the Parliamentary Assembly and agrees that climate change is having a serious impact on European species, habitats and landscapes, making them more vulnerable and posing a very serious threat to species and habitats protected by the Bern Convention;
2. Notes that a greater attention to biological diversity is necessary to mitigate climate change, as natural ecosystems including forests can act as carbon sinks and thus contribute positively to slow the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is believed to be one of the main causes of climate change;
3. Notes that climate change is a supplementary reason to further the world and European biodiversity agenda, as other unrelated phenomena having an impact on biodiversity (such as pollution, fragmentation of natural and semi-natural areas, intensification of agriculture and forestry, a growing urbanisation of the rural space and coastlines) may reduce the natural ability of natural systems in Europe to adapt to the new climate conditions;
4. Considers that ecosystem-based adaptation is fundamental to link biodiversity and climate change policies and provide multiple benefits at comparatively low cost, and that appropriate conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems has to be an important part of any adaptation strategy because biodiversity and ecosystem services help societies adapt to the adverse effects of climate change;
5. Notes that the Bern Convention has pioneered European work on the issue of biodiversity and climate changes as it decided in 2006 to set up a Group of Experts to provide information and guidance to Parties in understanding climate change impacts and threats and to provide Parties with tools and support in developing appropriate adaptation measures in national policies regarding the species and habitats protected under the Bern Convention;
6. Supports efforts in the framework of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to address the common drivers of biodiversity loss and climate change and understand, monitor and assess on the interlinkages between biodiversity climate change, land degradation and sustainable developments, encouraging ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and mitigation to fully exploit co-benefits and promoting also education, public awareness, capacity building on the topic;
7. Invites governments to carefully consider the impacts of mitigation on biodiversity, as some of the measures proposed (such increase of wind farms and other non-carbon energy plants or biofuel cultures) may threaten biodiversity protected by the Bern Convention;
8. Invites governments to support Council of Europe work on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in particular under the Bern Convention, as particularly relevant to help states better adapt to the challenges of climate change;
9. Invites governments to support increased synergies between the Framework Convention on Climate Change and biodiversity-related conventions;
10. Invites the Russian Federation and San Marino to consider ratifying the Bern Convention, thus joining the other Council of Europe member states in their work on climate change and biodiversity.