

Recommendation 1918 (2010)¹

Final version

Biodiversity and climate change

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Depletion of biological diversity is currently taking place at a much faster rate than natural extinction.
2. Human activities are the main cause of this depletion, both directly (soil and marine pollution, the introduction of invasive species, etc.) and indirectly (exponential increase in climate change brought on by various activities).
3. The smooth functioning of ecosystems is vital to the well-being of humankind, as water resources; soil fertility; firewood and timber; food; medicines; fossil fuels; solar, wind and geothermal energy and climate regulation are dependent on them.
4. Global warming is an undeniable reality and an unprecedented challenge for biodiversity. Worldwide, it is reflected in an increase in average air and sea temperatures, extensive snow and ice melt and rising average sea levels.
5. According to some experts, average temperatures on the earth's surface could increase by 1.4 to 5.8°C by the end of the 21st century, with a greater change on land and in the higher latitudes than at sea or in the tropics. Sea levels could rise by between 0.09 and 0.88 m and, according to certain experts, even more. Precipitation is also expected to increase in the higher latitudes and in equatorial regions whereas they should diminish in subtropical areas, with an increase in high rainfall. It is thought that 20% of coastal wetlands could disappear by 2080 because of rising sea levels.
6. Modelling changes in biodiversity is difficult. However, it is obvious that climate change has serious repercussions for animal populations, the distribution of species and ecosystems. This also has an impact on the length of seasons, reproduction periods, animal and plant growth, animal migration, the geographical distribution of species and density of populations, the frequency of parasitic infestations and diseases, etc.
7. Changes in biological diversity in ecosystems and landscapes, which are caused by climate change or other phenomena (such as deforestation and forest fires), in turn affect the climate by altering the absorption and emission of greenhouse gases in particular. In addition, changes in the structure of the biological communities in the upper layers of the oceans could alter their absorption of CO₂ or affect weather conditions and climate change. This is therefore a spiral-like process which could have disastrous results at global level.
8. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that there is very good evidence of the impact of climate change on species and habitats, making them all the more vulnerable. It underlines the fact that uncertainties concerning the precise effects of climate change on biodiversity should not be a reason for deferring concrete action to preserve ecosystems and that the principle of precaution must be applied.
9. The Assembly underlines the need for the full and immediate implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 April 2010 (18th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12198](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mrs John-Calame). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 April 2010 (18th Sitting).



10. It points out that in April 2002, at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, organised under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the governments undertook “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth” (2010 Biodiversity Target).

11. The Assembly also draws attention to its [Recommendation 1823 \(2008\)](#) on global warming and ecological disasters, [Resolution 1406 \(2004\)](#) on global warming: beyond Kyoto, [Recommendation 1883 \(2009\)](#) and [Resolution 1682 \(2009\)](#) on challenges posed by climate change, [Recommendation 1885 \(2009\)](#) on drafting an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, concerning the right to a healthy environment and [Recommendation 1862 \(2009\)](#) on environmentally induced migration and displacement: a 21st-century challenge.

12. The Assembly also draws attention to two recommendations of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention, ETS No. 104), namely Recommendation No. 135 (2008) on addressing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, which calls on the contracting parties and observer states to address and communicate, as a matter of urgency, the impacts of climate change on biological diversity and its conservation, among other things, and to Recommendation No. 143 (2009) on further guidance for parties on biodiversity and climate change, which calls, *inter alia*, on increasing efforts to improve understanding of the links between biodiversity and climate change.

13. It points out that the environment ministers of the G8 and emerging countries, meeting in Syracuse (Italy) in April 2009, adopted the Syracuse Charter on Biodiversity, making biodiversity a major global cause on a par with the fight against global warming and underlining the close link between the two.

14. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on the governments of Council of Europe member and observer states to take account of the opportunities offered by the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 to:

14.1. improve the interface between science and politics, particularly with regard to biodiversity, whose importance still seems to be underestimated by some policy makers and by a large proportion of the public;

14.2. devise appropriate policies and take concrete measures to promote the conservation of biological diversity and reduce the impact of climate change on biodiversity;

14.3. develop evaluation systems to improve our knowledge of how biological diversity interacts with ecosystem structure and functioning and deepen our understanding of how biodiversity reacts to climate change factors and other exogenous pressures;

14.4. encourage synergy and interaction between national, regional and local environmental projects and policies on climate change and the objectives of international treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity;

14.5. promote a more efficient transfer of best practices in preventing biodiversity loss, which is essential in order to ensure that a co-ordinated response can be devised and implemented at European level;

14.6. develop education, information and participation programmes targeting the public and policy makers concerning the value of biodiversity and the importance of the conduct of individuals, businesses and the authorities in preserving it and mitigating the impact of climate change;

14.7. step up the fight against illegal trading in fauna and flora;

14.8. fully respect the status of protected areas, extend them as far as possible and establish environmental corridors to link them, while focusing in particular on cross-border areas which are more vulnerable because of the considerations of territorial sovereignty that affect them;

14.9. ensure that the networks of protected areas and the environmental corridors between them improve possibilities for flora and fauna to adapt to climate change through migration;

14.10. prohibit large infrastructure projects that would cut through, and thus destroy, the above-mentioned environmental corridors;

14.11. protect all old-growth forests, living wetlands and permanent grasslands/pasture lands as carbon stores and sinks and important habitats;

- 14.12. adapt forestry techniques in the forests used for economic purposes so as to reduce the impact on climate and biodiversity;
- 14.13. facilitate transition to sustainable agriculture which would produce quality products, maintain habitats and landscapes with a high ecological value, and have a low impact on the climate;
- 14.14. support the renewable energy developments that have a real effect on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and have no negative impact on biodiversity, and in no way support “greenwashing projects”;
- 14.15. co-ordinate the responses to climate change and biodiversity loss by different sectors to achieve synergy and avoid conflicting actions and duplication of efforts;
- 14.16. implement Recommendation No. 135 (2008) of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on addressing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, which sets out detailed guidelines for concrete action at all levels;
- 14.17. identify, on the basis of the experience acquired in the context of the activities conducted with a view to achieving the “2010 Biodiversity Target”, a common strategy for a common framework of “post-2010 activities”.