



Mr. Miroslav Spasojević

Chair

Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of
Senior Officials for Preparing the
Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe"
c/o Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection
Omladinskih Brigada 1
11000 Belgrade

Serbia

Brussels, 6 February 2007

**Re: Biodiversity as part of the official agenda of the sixth Ministerial Conference
"Environment for Europe"**

Dear Mr. Spasojević,

As you are certainly aware, the European Ministers of Environment and Heads of Delegations of the States participating in the process of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity at the Fifth *Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference* in 2003, Kyiv, agreed on the historic decision to halt the loss of biodiversity by the year 2010. This was achieved after the European Union Heads of State and Government committed themselves to the same target at the Gothenburg Council in 2001. This issue gained European importance and was incorporated into various European policy agendas. Expanding to a Pan-European dimension, the Governments adopted the *Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity*, and thereby showed their – justified – concern about Pan European biodiversity which is still highly threatened in 2007.

This commitment was made after the *Pan-European Biological Landscape Diversity Strategy* (PEBLDS) was developed within the Environment for Europe process and adopted at the Third Ministerial Conference in Sofia, 1995 and consistently reviewed at the Fourth and Fifth Ministerial Conferences in 1998 and 2003 respectively. Thanks to this process and finally to the Kyiv Conference and its ambitious outcomes (the Resolution) a lot of momentum was created around the 2010 biodiversity target, and the topic seemed finally to be taken seriously. This is all the more justified, considering the importance and contribution of biodiversity to human well being in a variety of ways including through its contribution to material welfare and livelihoods, security, resilience to climate change, social relations, health, food, recreation and fuels as well as freedom of choices and actions.

It is, therefore, all the more incomprehensible for us that biodiversity as a topic is as of today not part of the Conference's main official agenda, but it is foreseen to be reduced to a session under the subtitle 'parallel processes' - whereas there are only three more years left to reach the 2010 biodiversity target. Unfortunately, as the preliminary findings of the Belgrade Assessment also show, biodiversity in the Pan-European region is likely to decline further and the 2010 target will not be achieved without considerable additional efforts. Thus the necessity to discuss how to best continue the promising Pan-European collaboration has never been more urgent. We

would, therefore, like to propose that the current agenda for the Belgrade Conference is adjusted by including biodiversity and in particular the 2010 biodiversity target as part of the main official ministerial agenda.

It is our understanding that similar concerns have already been expressed by the chair of the *Pan-European Biological Landscape Diversity Strategy* (PEBLDS), and IUCN's Vice President on behalf of a wide European constituency from Governments and NGOs.

It seems that there has been no visible effort in adjusting the agenda of the Belgrade conference to reflect these concerns. Based on this, we must inform you that, unless the appropriate action is taken to address these concerns and accord biodiversity the place on the main official agenda, the signatory parties to this letter have decided not to attend the biodiversity session – and the preceding coordination meetings - at the Sixth Ministerial Conference in Belgrade, which is to be organised together with Ministers and NGOs.

We believe that the situation can still be rectified and we strongly encourage you to consult the Executive Committee on the above matter during your meeting in Geneva on 14-15 February 2007. In Kyiv, the situation was solved by only asking for implementation of the Resolution on Biodiversity within the Pan-European region, making it only relevant for countries sharing the Pan-European region.

We trust we shall hear from you in reply to our concerns by the end of this month. Otherwise, we will regretfully inform our respective constituencies about our decision not to attend or participate in the preparations for the biodiversity segment at the Belgrade Conference. We shall also consider informing the press about the apparent lack of commitment by Pan-European states to biodiversity issues and their earlier pledge to halt its decline by 2010.

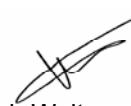
Considering the importance of Pan European cooperation, we would much prefer the alternative option of being able to give credit to the importance of the Environment for Europe process, and seek all possible means for keeping biodiversity in the spotlight of public administrations and the public alike.

With the assurance of our highest consideration we are looking forward to find a constructive way forward in order to ensure a successful outcome of the Sixth Ministerial Conference in Belgrade.

Yours sincerely,



Andras Krolopp
General Secretary,
CEEWEB



Rob Wolters
Executive Director, ECNC



Alistair Gammell
Director of International
Operations, Royal Society
for the Protection of Birds
(RSPB)



Sebastian Winkler
Head, Countdown 2010



Tamas Marghescu
IUCN Regional Director for
Europe



Tony Long
Director, WFF European
Policy Office