

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION – EU STRATEGY ON INVASIVE SPECIES

CALL TO EXPRESS INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EU STRATEGY ON INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive species are species whose introduction and/or spread may threaten biological diversity or have other unforeseen consequences. They may cause serious damage not only to ecosystems but also to crops and livestock, disrupting the local ecology, impacting on human health and producing serious economic effects. The threats from invasive species will have to be addressed if the EU is to achieve its goal of halting the decline of biodiversity.

Biodiversity – the variety of ecosystems, species and genes – provides vital goods and services that underpin economic prosperity, social well-being and quality of life. On 15 March 2010, the Environment Council agreed to achieve the headline target of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020¹. This is framed in a vision whereby by 2050 the European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity's intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided. These vision and target were endorsed by the Spring European Council on 26 March 2010², which noted that "*There is an urgent need to reverse continuing trends of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. The European Council is committed to the long term biodiversity 2050 vision and the 2020 target set out in the Council's conclusions of 15 March 2010.*" In this context, the Commission is now preparing an EU post-2010 biodiversity strategy, for which it has organised a stakeholder consultation on 3 June 2010. The EU strategy on invasive species will be a component of the post-2010 biodiversity strategy.

Invasive species represent a rapidly growing threat to biodiversity, environment, economy and human health, with costs estimated to be at least EUR 12 billion per year³. Moreover, due to the expansion of trade and mobility, threats from invasive species are increasing at an accelerated pace.

The Commission Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on Invasive Species"⁴ noted that while some EU instruments exist to deal with other drivers of biodiversity loss - namely habitat change, climate change, overexploitation and pollution – there is currently no comprehensive instrument at EU level to tackle invasive species. Action at EU level has been taken to address different aspects of the invasive species threats. In particular, the Commission is currently revising its Plant Health Regime aimed at preventing the

¹ Council Conclusions (Environment), 15 March 2010

² European Council Conclusions, 26 March 2010, par. 14

³ Kettunen *et al.* 2009

⁴ COM(2008)789

introduction and spread of harmful organisms which are injurious to plants or plant products. The option of expanding the scope of the legislation to include invasive species impacts on human health or direct economic consequences is being considered. Despite the existing instruments, a comprehensive mechanism at EU level to address the threat of invasive species does not yet exist.

The need for action to deal with the threats posed by invasive species has been stressed at the highest political level. The Environment Council on 25 June 2009⁵ called for "*an effective Strategy which should fill the existing gaps at EU level and establish a comprehensive EU invasive species framework in a proportionate and cost-effective manner [...]*" Support for the development of such strategy has also been expressed by the Committee of the Regions and the European Social and Economic Committee.

The feedback received from the Council, other EU institutions and bodies and stakeholders will now be taken into account by the Commission in preparing its proposal for an EU Strategy on Invasive Species, which it intends to bring forward in 2011.

In this context the Commission is organising a stakeholder consultation, during which components of a future EU Strategy on Invasive Species will be presented. The Commission wishes to involve all interested parties as it is convinced that the strategy can only be successful if embraced by all stakeholder groups whose activities are interlinked with biodiversity. The objective of the consultation is to obtain a representative picture of the positions of relevant stakeholders and to collect the views of the participants on the future strategy. The meeting will be held on **3 September 2010, from 9.00 to 18.00, at the Beaulieu 25 building of the European Commission** (Avenue de Beaulieu 25, 1160 Brussels)

Participants will first receive an introduction and will then be invited to express their views and contribute ideas on how to shape the strategy to ensure its success in addressing in a comprehensive way the issues related to invasive species. The meeting will be held in English.

Participation is open to Member States and all interested stakeholders. **You can confirm your interest** in this meeting by filling in the attached table and submitting it **before 14 July 2010 via e-mail** to ENV-BIODIVERSITY@ec.europa.eu. Due to the limited capacity of the venue, seats will be allocated in a way to ensure a fair and representative participation of stakeholders. Invitations will be limited to one individual per organisation and priority will be given to organisations representing the views of stakeholders at EU level. Those who are allocated a seat will be sent a formal invitation by 28 July 2010 with further details on the meeting venue and guidance on the agenda and structure of the consultation. In order to facilitate preparation for the meeting and reflection on the issue, we will disseminate background documents for the meeting in due course.

Stakeholders will have the possibility to express their position in writing for up to two weeks after the meeting.

⁵ Council Conclusions (Environment), 25 June 2009, par. 33