1. **Record of Previous Meetings**

1.1. **Approval of the summary record of the previous CGBN meeting. (12th and 13th March 2015) (Doc 1.1)**

The summary record of the previous meeting was approved.

1.2. **Nature Directors meeting**

Latvia reported from the meeting of the Nature Directors held in Riga on 28-29 May 2015, back-to-back with a Nature conference on 26-27 May, which took stock of the successes and the failures of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. Key messages from the conference concerned the importance of nature-based solutions for boosting the economy; the need to maintain the Nature Directives and to improve implementation and cooperation between sectors. The CGBN expressed its thanks to the Latvian Presidency for the excellent organization of the meetings in Riga.

The colleagues from Luxemburg informed the meeting that the ND meeting during the period of their Presidency was foreseen for the period 25-27 November 2015. The meeting will be held in parallel, and include joint sessions with, the meetings of the
Water Directors and of the Marine Directors. The joint meeting will produce a position paper on main synergies, based on a draft and prepared by a working group with the Commission and several Member States. A questionnaire will be sent out to the coordination groups to consider the proposed issues and define the final agenda. There will be open sessions on the mid-term review of the Biodiversity Strategy (with a view to the Council Conclusions planned for 16 December), on the Fitness Check of the Nature Directives and on the SDGs and biodiversity. The NDM will finish with a closed session on governance with a view to increasing the synergies between the NDM and the CGBN.

The Commission noted that a paper from the Green Infrastructure WG will be provided to the Strategic Coordination Group to be eventually tabled at the joint NDM in Luxembourg. Written comments from the Member States can still be taken into consideration. An agenda point on forest biodiversity policy coherence has been proposed by DE, and a paper will be sent out by the Luxembourg Presidency.

The CGBN was also briefed on the upcoming Dutch Presidency's plans for a meeting on 28-30 June 2016, combining a NDM, a conference on future resilience nature policy, and a high-level meeting to finish the Presidency's term.

2. Update on the Nature Fitness Check (Doc 2.0)

Micheal O'Briain gave a brief overview of progress on the Fitness Check, explaining the context and setting out the timetable and the actions carried out so far. He emphasized that the Commission is keeping closely to the rules for a fitness check as a retrospective, ex-post evaluation rather than a future policy analysis. The evidence gathering from Member States’ authorities and stakeholders was completed by the end of July, amounting to a huge body of information that still needs to be compiled and analysed. The consultants have carried out more detailed analyses in 10 Member Stakes and interviews with EU stakeholder communities. The public consultation launched by the Commission resulted in more than 550 000 replies (out of which 520 000 were from one campaign, 99% of the contributions were from individuals and 97% only answered part 1), as well as 10 000 comments in 22 languages. There were further campaigns by 7-8 other organisations, generating a considerable number of responses, all of which are relevant and will be taken into account. A report will be available in October. A Fitness Check Conference will take place on 20 November in Brussels with 400 participants (deadline for registration is 9 October). A scoping document will be issued before the conference, providing some emerging key findings. The Conference itself will represent a key element of the peer review process, in order to identify significant gaps or misrepresentation of analysis. Invitations have been sent with priority to those who have been involved in the fitness check exercise and to Member States authorities (at ND level), with due care to ensure geographical balance. The current and the next two Presidencies will be represented in the high-level session. Four sessions will deal with the main categories of the evaluation. The results of the in-depth analysis of 10 countries will be presented on this occasion. The final report from the consultant will be available in December 2015. The plan is to publish a Staff Working Document (SWD) on the findings of the Fitness Check towards the end of April 2016; however there is no guarantee of timing since it will be subject to internal procedures and other forms of scrutiny.
In the debate that followed, FR expressed appreciation of the Commission's approach of reviewing carefully all evidence before drawing conclusions; and requested more information on the in-depth analyses done in ten Member States. Micheal O’Briain explained that evidence had been gathered from all countries but the consultants and the Commission have also visited and interviewed authorities and stakeholders in a sub-set of ten countries. These visits have been extremely valuable for obtaining information on problematic issues e.g. costs and administrative burdens, which will feed into the overall analysis.

The context of the Fitness Check as part of the Commission’s Better Regulation Agenda was explained, as well as the procedure to be followed. The SWD to be published in spring will provide an assessment of past policies and will be subject to an inter-service consultation. The Commission may follow-up on the findings with a Communication later in the year, looking at possible options to address identified gaps and needs. An impact assessment of all options will also be required.

Concerning other institutions, it was noted that the Committee of the Regions had done a territorial impact study of the Nature Directives and developed an own initiative opinion. The Court of Auditors is preparing a performance audit of Natura 2000 looking at further Member States (FR, DE, PL). The European Parliament intends to include recommendations on the Nature Directives’ Fitness Check as part of their own-initiative report on the mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

3. Mid-Term Review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020

The Commission presented the main messages of the Mid-term Review report, scheduled for adoption in the first week of October. The report draws on the EEA State of the Environment and Outlook Report (SOER, 2015) and the State of Nature Report 2015, as well as on Member States’ contributions. The overall conclusion is that, despite some important policy progress, improved knowledge and many conservation successes at the local level, biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services continue in the EU and globally, and that the 2020 targets can only be reached with considerably enhanced implementation efforts and more effective integration with a range of policies. It was further noted that the European Parliament would hold a hearing on 12 October, with a view to adopting an own-initiative report on the Biodiversity mid-term review at ENVI Committee at the end of December. The Luxembourg Presidency will hold three debates at the WP on the Environment, with the first debate scheduled for 13 December, and a debate on Target 6 at one WP on International Environmental Issues on 27 October. Environment Council Conclusions will be adopted in December.

In the discussion that followed, several Member States expressed concerns about the use of colour arrows to illustrate progress which over-simplifies complex realities and could be misleading, in particular when comparing progress on process (such as under Target 5 on IAS) with progress under targets that are more outcome-oriented (such as Target 1 on implementing Nature Legislation). Furthermore, different language is used in the targets and in the actions. It was suggested that the Commission prepare a clear message for the press to avoid misinterpretation.

BirdLife drew attention to the decline of agriculture-related biodiversity and expressed the view that agricultural policy is going backwards in terms of biodiversity protection, as no Member State has excluded the use of pesticides on EFAs and 60% of MS have not included landscape elements in what could come under EFAs; there are also reports on
the destruction of hedgerows in anticipation of the coming into force of the greening element; and generally a scaling down of biodiversity measures in the majority of RDPs. The European Habitats Forum emphasized the need for addressing biodiversity in the mid-term review of the CAP, in particular with regards to grasslands as only half of natural grasslands in Natura 2000 have been designated as sensitive.

Further issues raised concerned the draft first list of invasive alien species of Union concern which does not include many dangerous IAS; the need for a more strategic EU level approach to financing and implementing Green Infrastructure; the issue of responsibility and accountability for biodiversity commitments; addressing the underlying reasons for the lack of implementation and integration; and the links between natural capital and health, wellbeing and the economy, as well as between biodiversity and climate and energy policies.

The Commission acknowledged the methodological difficulties arising from differences between the targets and resulting in differences in progress assessment, and noted that this issue is explained in the beginning of the report. The decisions on the arrows were based on expert judgement according to each individual target, and adopted after consultation of the services of the Commission. More specifically, the green arrow for Target 5 (IAS) concerns an area where there had been no EU policy at the time of the Biodiversity Strategy’s adoption, and we are as far as we could possibly expect to be at the point of the mid-term review. The positive mid-term assessment is based on the fulfilment of the first steps; the next crucial step will be implementation in order to achieve results on the ground and reach the target by 2020. The first Union list will be updated as new risk assessments get completed as required by the IAS Regulation.

DG AGRI confirmed that the mid-term review report and any identified weaknesses in the CAP greening measures would be considered very carefully in the evaluation; and asked the BirdLife representative for as complete as possible information on the examples mentioned. The CAP evaluation will happen in two steps, in 2017 and in 2019. It will look into performance, achievement of policy objectives, socio-economic and environmental aspects. So far, 80 RDPs have been adopted and the rest are expected to be adopted by the year’s end when the picture of the regions’ and Member States’ commitment will be clearer.

In her concluding remarks, the chair, Laure Ledoux, made the following points:

- The take-home message is that EU is not on track to reach the 2020 Biodiversity Targets;
- The Biodiversity mid-term review report is in its last stages of adoption and cannot be edited further; however, the input from the CGBN Members will be used to prepare for presenting the findings and for discussions in the Council and Parliament.
- It is important that the Commission and the Member States reflect upon what needs to be done between now and 2020, as well as on how to use the discussion around the MTR to attract more attention to biodiversity.

The documents composing the MTR 'package' - short Policy Report, detailed Technical Report, MS reports and the leaflet – will all be available on Europa (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm). To facilitate the access to information contained in the different documents, an interactive presentation is also available on BISE (http://biodiversity.europa.eu/mtr/biodiversity-strategy-plan) together with the contributions of the Member States.
4. **Summary Overview of progress made since the last meeting concerning the delivery of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. (Doc 4.0)**

In addition to the written information note circulated in advance to the CGBN meeting, the CGBN Members received a brief oral update on progress under each of the six biodiversity targets.

Concerning target 1, work has continued on the biogeographic process, with two major events: a kick off seminar for the Continental region in Luxembourg in July, and a marine seminar in France in May, as well as a number of workshops and bilateral meetings. The Communication Platform is being increasingly used and improved: it now provides information on upcoming events, access to documents, and work is underway to link it up with the LIFE database. A new guidance document on Natura 2000 and forests is now available on the Biodiversity webpage.

Concerning Target 2, it was noted that a joint meeting of the MAES and GI Working Groups on 18 September discussed how to use MAES for green infrastructure and restoration priorities; how to integrate ecosystem condition and ecosystem services; and how EU technical and other standards could facilitate the development of the GI market. A MAES delivery workshop on 15-16 December in Brussels will take stock of progress and highlight links between MAES and IPBES for Europe. Work is progressing on natural capital valuation and accounting, and the Commission has launched a Knowledge Information Project (KIP-INCA). Concerning Green Infrastructure, the workshop on monitoring of GI deployment planned for July in ISPRA has been postponed to November / early December due to low rate of registration in the summer months.

Concerning Target 3A, AGRI noted that the greening evaluation would be initiated very soon, to be finalised in 2017. Concerning Target 3B, the EU will monitor the use of Forest Management Plans in relation to Action 12 of the Biodiversity Strategy. The ongoing study to support an Impact Assessment of policy options for NNL looks at two forestry-related measures for monitoring.

Concerning Target 4, the written information note refers to two Commission proposals concerning fishing opportunities in the Atlantic and in the Baltic.

The following issues were raised in the discussion: how the Commission intends to encourage action on restoration prioritisation by the Member States; the arguments for postponing the Guidance on Art. 6 until after the Fitness Check of the Nature Directives; the finalising of the first list on IAS of Union concern, and related activities underway in several Member States.

5. **Planning**

The planning document is kept regularly up to date on circabc. Participants will be invited to take note of future events and to suggest amendments (preferably in writing before the meeting).

The meeting took note of the information in the planning document.
AOB

The proposed format of CGBN meetings (information points largely replaced by written information notes in advance to the meetings, and more discussion points on the agenda) was agreed to be good.

19\textsuperscript{th} MEETING OF THE CO-ORDINATION GROUP FOR BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE

Held on 24\textsuperscript{th} September 2015 in Brussels

List of attendees

**Member States:**

- Austria: Arno ASCHAUER
- Belgium: Els MARTENS, Catherine DEBRUYNE
- Bulgaria: Valeri GEORGIEV
- Croatia: Ana KOBASLIC
- Cyprus: Marina XENOPHONTOS
- Czech Republic: Tereza KUSNIROVA
- Denmark: Lars RUDFELD, Annette SAMUELENS
- Estonia: Kadri MÖLLER
- Finland: Kristina NIKKONEN
- France: Fanny LENDI-RAMIREZ
- Greece: Eleni TRYFON
- Hungary: Rozalia ERDINE SZEKERES
- Ireland: Ciaran O'KEEFFE
- Italy: Eugenio DUPRÉ
- Latvia: Ilona MENDZINA
- Luxembourg: Claude ORIGER, Eva Maria MAYERHOFER
- Malta: Marie-Thérèse GAMBIN
- The Netherlands: Hans VAN DEN HEUVEL
- Portugal: Mario SILVA
- Romania: Samad John SMARANDA
- Slovak Republic: Jana DURKOVA, Veronika VYSNA
- Spain: Miguel AYMERICH
- Sweden: Anna LINDHAGEN
- United Kingdom: Heeran BUHECHA, Caryn MARY LE ROUX

Not represented: Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia

**European Environment Agency / European Topic Centre:** Andrus MEINER (EEA), Dominique RICHARD (ETC/BD), Sophie CONDÉ (ETC/BD)

**NGOs and other stakeholders:**

- BirdLife: Ariel BRUNNER
- CEPF (Confédération européenne des propriétaires forestiers): Clemens von DODERER
- COPA-COGECA: Christiane MOELLHOFF
- EAA (European Anglers' Alliance): Jan KAPPEL
- ECNC (European Centre for Nature Conservation): Neil MCINTOSH
- EEB: Leonardo MAZZA
- EHF (European Habitats Forum): Sue COLLINS, Vera COELHO
- ELO (European Landowners’ Organization): Marie-Alice BUDNIOK
- FACE (Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU): Charlotte SIMON, David SCALLAN
- FOE (Friends of the Earth): Friedrich WULF
- IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature): Melanie YAMMINE, Ana NIETO
- UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme): Maria MORGADO
- WWF: Martina MLINARIC

**European Commission** *(attended all or part of the meeting):*

- Olivier DIANI, AGRI.H4
- Rayka HAUSER, ENV.B2
- Laure LEDOUX, ENV.B2
- Stefan LEINER, ENV.B2
- Pat MURPHY, ENV.B2
- Anne TELLER, ENV.B2
- Sulvia BAROVA, ENV.B3
- Marco CIPRIANI, ENV.B3
- Ian JARDINE, ENV.B3
- Micheal O'Briain, ENV.B3
- François KREMER, ENV.B3
- Fotis PAPOULIAS, ENV.B3