

Networking for Environment and Biodiversity Conservation in Ethiopia

Residence of the EU, 17 May 2011

Welcoming words from Xavier Marchal

Ambassador, Head of EU Delegation to Ethiopia

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this event, a contribution towards environment and biodiversity conservation in Ethiopia.

H.E. President Girma has given his patronage to this evening. I welcome his Chief of Protocol whom the President has asked to represent him.

Many people in Ethiopia and from abroad know how rich and diversified is the land of Ethiopia. This spectacular country is endowed with extraordinary diversity. It possesses unique areas of high endemism such as Afro-montane and Somali hotspots, the SW-Coffee Forests, or the Gambella eco-system, to name just a few of them.

I was in Gambella recently, and had the privilege to observe the extraordinary natural assets Ethiopia is sharing with Southern Sudan. It was evident that both nature and large scale farming can perfectly reinforce each other for the benefit of the Nation. This is a question of land use planning, and of diversifying the usage of the land.

I hope that one day the swamps of Gambella will be connected to South Sudan in a vast transfrontier Peace Park. The notorious white eared kob will then finally acquire an Ethiopian citizenship which it deserves, in addition to the Southern Sudanese one it has already.

The EU can help and assist in this, through bilateral and regional funding.

While in Ethiopia the focus is on growth through the Growth and Transformation Plan, with the pressure from increasing population, challenges of climate change, there is a risk that the particularly rich natural assets of Ethiopia could be neglected. The consequences of this would then be felt by the future generations.

Time is of essence to proactively respond to current trends of increasing resource degradation, and avoid irreversible damage. This requires a balanced approach between economic growth, sustained environmental services and rural livelihood enhancement.

The protection of the natural assets is in fact an intrinsic part of the quest for long term food security.

The climate change impact in Ethiopia, which is expected to amplify current trends of land and ecosystem degradation, requires immediate strategic mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Prime Minister Meles knows this very well, as he has taken a leading role in this on behalf of the African Continent.

Let me say a few words about EU's commitment to improving environment and mitigate climate change.

Globally, The EU and its Member States are committed to limit the effects of climate change to 2 degrees Celsius. They will commit 7.2 billion euros to that between 2010 and 2012.

At Continental level, let me mention the African Monitoring of the Environment and Sustainable Development (AMESD), an EU funded project of 21 million euros to enhance the African capacity for the operational monitoring of climate change and its effects. Another initiative from the Africa-EU joint partnership on Climate change and the Environment, the Great Green Wall of

the Sahara and the Sahel, supports the development of a regional and cross-border harmonised strategy for the fight against desertification. 8 million euros have also been earmarked to support ClimDev Africa, a pan-African ambitious initiative to collect and analyse climate data and inform African decision-makers and farmers in adaptation to climate.

At the level of the Horn of Africa, an IGAD Dryland Forest and Biodiversity regional project is in preparation, with an EU funding of 14 million euros. This is to support cross-border eco-systems.

As regards Ethiopia, I would like to mention the Coffee Improvement Programme, including a biodiversity inventory for SW-Ethiopia which provided a widely recognised baseline for biodiversity conservation in Ethiopia, including the UNESCO Biosphere reserve initiative.

Within its focus on food security, The EU considers natural resources a key determinant for people's livelihood and supports the sustainable management of Ethiopia's environment through a number of activities such as Participatory Forest Management, Non-Timber Forest Products, biodiversity conservation including conservation of mountain bamboo and its sustainable use as biomass energy (total: 31.7 million euros).

On climate change, the newly signed Global Climate Change Alliance in Ethiopia aims to increase the capacity development of the Government to lead the climate change agenda and to promote a set of innovative community based mitigation and adaptation activities (total budget: 13.7 million euros).

Moreover, EU support to the Productive Safety Net and Sustainable Land Management initiatives also substantially contributes to natural resource and eco-systems conservation and rehabilitation.

Specific EU support to protected areas and biodiversity conservation is currently provided to the Afro-montane eco-systems in the Bale and Simien parks in addition to two community conservation areas (Abune Yoseph and Gwassa). Participatory in-situ conservation of wild coffee (*coffea arabica*) is piloted in Bench-Maji, in SW-Ethiopia. Further support to protected area management is envisaged through a Cultural and Biological Heritage Conservation Project under the 10th EDF with a specific focus on Simien Park but also country-wide support to sustainable park management and community involvement. Several Member States are also supporting protected areas and biodiversity conservation activities in various parts of the country.

To conclude however, this event is more about Ethiopia of course than it is about what the EU does to support her issues related to environment.

We are now preparing a vast EU funded programme to support culture and biodiversity. I hope that it will be a flagship of EU-Ethiopia partnership.

It is Ethiopia in the end which has to capture the full dimension of her extraordinary assets, and which has to take full action to protect and develop them, as an indispensable part of her growth agenda.

Time is certainly of essence, Ethiopia can count on EU support, and has to be determinate in tackling the challenges of long term sustainable development, for the benefit of future generations of her people.

Thank you