

Message from the Chair

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The United Nations has declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. This year the global community will evaluate the progress made in the conservation of biodiversity since 2002, when world leaders committed to achieve a significant reduction in the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Also promoted was the development of a set of indicators to assess the level of accomplishment of this ambitious target.

Unfortunately, all the data that have been collected in these years confirm that there is little to celebrate. In fact, in these 8 years after the adoption of the 2010 target, **the rate of biodiversity loss has increased instead of reducing**, and the main pressures on the diversity of life have worsened, reflecting the inadequacy of the efforts so far put in place by the world community.

This is particularly true for invasive alien species, that have emerged as a key driver of biodiversity loss, responsible for the majority of species' extinctions occurred in the last centuries, impacting 33% of all threatened birds, 6% of threatened mammals and 11% of threatened amphibians. Invasive species also affect many ecosystem services, limiting access to food and water for many local communities the world over.

Despite the evidence on the negative impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity and livelihoods, biological invasions continue to grow; no regulation has been adopted at the International level to prevent the movement of even some of the worst invasive species. Additionally, the economic crisis may even cause a reduction in the resources available to tackle the threat of invasive alien species.

We must use this year to reverse this picture. We now have a better understanding of the causes of invasions, of the best ways to prevent further invasions, and have developed effective tools to tackle biological invaders when prevention fails. In 2010 we need to improve our efforts to influence political debate, inform decision makers on what actions are most urgent, and make sure that decisions taken are based on the best available information.