

## **Contributions of Companies and Business Associations to the Conservation of Biological Diversity**

Angelika Pohlenz, Secretary General, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)  
Germany

- Together with its member companies and associations, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has monitored the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity since it was signed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. ICC represents the business community during the CBD conferences on issues being negotiated. During the Bonn-conference ICC will focus on sustainable agriculture, technology transfer and Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS).
- I am convinced that biodiversity is important for business in many ways! Nevertheless, one could assume that many specific industry sectors only have a rather unclear idea of biodiversity all embraces and what it could mean for their daily business. Therefore, it is of great importance that the UN conference on biodiversity will take place in Bonn. This offers the opportunity to discuss biodiversity issues more intensively in Germany and will hopefully lead to a clearer understanding of business and biodiversity. ICC will follow the discussions and contribute to the dialogue – there will also be an ICC-exhibit and side events at COP9.
- From my point of view, the fundamental conflict concerning biodiversity is not primarily between business and nature, but between man and nature. We will be more numerous on this planet: by 2050, the world population will rise from 6 to 9 billion. This means that the demand for land and areas to be used for settlement, traffic and agriculture will increase dramatically.
- In the following I would like to put forward three theses in order to explain where business is already contributing to biodiversity and also where there is further potential:

### **Thesis 1:**

**Many companies are already contributing to biodiversity – often under different “heading” – such as resource management of water and energy or environmental protection in general – without applying the term ‘biodiversity’.**

- The Federal Nature Conservation Agency in Germany estimates that due to climate change around 5 to 30 percent of species will underlie a higher risk of extinction. Many companies have initiated corporate programmes for climate protection and energy reduction and are thus contributing indirectly to biodiversity.
- Another example: Since the 90's, most of the big companies have already been implementing environmental and sustainable reporting systems which go far beyond legal regulations. They measure, list and describe in detail the impact of their business activities on the environment. The GRI guidelines already cover aspects relating to biodiversity. The Business and Biodiversity Initiative of the German Federal Government will give a further impetus to these aspects.

**Thesis 2:**

**Often the protection of biodiversity is already a business case for companies.**

- Ideally the protection of biodiversity, including efficient resource management should be linked with the company's basis of business. In this case responsibly acting companies can contribute in a credible manner to biodiversity. Both – business and nature – take advantage – a classic win-win situation. Examples:
  - Tourism is directly dependent on healthy environments beautiful landscapes, etc. Tourists like to surround themselves with pristine nature and a rich flora and fauna. Therefore long-term oriented companies that act responsibly have an enormous interest in conservation of biological diversity in tourist areas.
  - TUI, a German travel company, for example evaluates their business partners such as hotels with regard to environmental benchmarking. The continuous improvement of environment quality standards is part of their business. In many regions "beach cleaning activities" are regularly carried out by TUI hotels or local agencies; TUI employees and guests participate at these "events". TUI also responds to practical problems like the increased risk of forest fires: The company alerts its guests for the risk of unintended fire rising and implements projects for prevention and natural reforestation.

- Sustainable agriculture is of central interest for the nutrition of a rising world population. Here, good agricultural practices can be combined with the protection of biodiversity. Protection of biodiversity and maintenance of functioning ecosystems, such as water supply and soil protection, play a central role. One best-practice example:
  - Bayer CropScience cooperates with customers, research institutes and NGOs – for example in Brazil and the UK – in projects on how to regulate water flows on farms or by increasing biodiversity of birds and pollinators through the planting of native trees and the cultivation or preservation of hedges or field margins. At the same time, these measures contribute to the company's basis of business in the long run: species and water flow maintenance are important ecosystem functions and contribute services such as water regulation, erosion control or the pollination of agricultural plants by insects.

**Thesis 3:**  
**Biodiversity is a business opportunity.**

- The application of biological principles to the study and design of technology and products is known as bionics. One of the best-known bionics examples with regard to a water- and soil-repellent application is the lotus effect. But also new natural materials for cosmetics or genetic resources for medicine generate new products and business activity.
- Plant breeders use the biological diversity of genetic resources for the breeding of improved varieties. These have contributed during the last fifty years to increased harvests by 30 to 60 percent overall. An increase in productivity – on the basis of sustainable agriculture – reduces land consumption dramatically. According to calculations, since the 60's the deforestation of an area the size of the United States were avoided as a result of the productivity increase in agriculture due to modern technologies, including mechanization and irrigation.
- Moreover, new environmental technologies can contribute to the solution of problems such as the infiltration and biological invasion of non-native, alien species from other ecosystems. Container vessels, for instance, take up water for stabilization - depending on their cargo. When arriving at the port of destination, they empty these water tanks with 5.000 to 50.000 tons. In doing so, non-native microorganisms and also fish, shells or crabs are introduced into the existing ecosystem and might harm it. Evonik Degussa

has developed in cooperation with Hamann a sophisticated ballast water management system, named *SEDNA®*, disinfecting the water with *PERACLEAN® Ocean* without chlorine. Thus the ballast water tanks can be emptied at the port of destination without negative effect.

These are only a few examples that clearly indicate where companies are already contributing to biodiversity and where further potential could be expected.

Biodiversity is characterized by high complexity and interdependency of different factors and functions. This complexity makes biodiversity highly interesting for business. The potential for business and German companies particularly consist in their capacity of very sophisticated and innovative research. These skills should be used for further research that leads to the benefit of all: man and biodiversity.