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ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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Engaging the Private Sector

Biodiversity is the life support system for our planet. Our livelihoods depend on biodiversity, in the form of ecosystems, species and genetic material. Clearly, ecosystems, species and genes are being lost or damaged in an alarming rate. Business plays an important role in biodiversity conservation. There is a strong business case for integrating biodiversity considerations into core management systems. Healthy ecosystems support healthy people, companies, sound economies and hence sustainable development however, not enough companies have done so. But still many companies do understand that if they want to have the license to operate avoid consumer boycott and disruption of their supply chain they should address environmental issues.

In order to survive, businesses need to generate profits. However, many businesses have recognized that long-term sustainable development requires good environmental performance and good social performance as well. Biodiversity is directly linked to good environmental, economic, and social performance. These elements are consistent with the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity: conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits. Taking into consideration that there are biodiversity risks as well as biodiversity opportunities to assess and manage in order to improve corporate performance. Companies should manage their biodiversity impacts simply because it is the right thing to do.

There are already a number of different partnerships, forums and initiatives such as:

Leaders for Nature – this initiative engages emerging business leaders in a process of reflections and learning about nature conservation

Business and Biodiversity Offset (BBOP) – this is a partnership between companies, governments and conservation experts to explore biodiversity offsets

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) – has created the conditions a reliable exchange of sustainability information through the development and continuous improvement of the GRI Sustainability Reporting Framework.

Germany - Biodiversity in Good Company - The international Business and Biodiversity Initiative was founded in the context of the German Presidency of the CBD. The German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) in turn commissioned Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) to implement it. This initiative aims to integrate the private sector more closely with achieving the Convention on Biological Diversity's objectives by encouraging companies to: integrate the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity in their operational management systems, publish their best practices and participate actively in the 10th Conference of Parties to the CBD in 2010 in Nagoya, Japan.

Portugal - The Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Institute (ICNB), Portugal has organized a Business and biodiversity meeting attended by various companies that undertook in 2007 to incorporate biodiversity management and conservation into their business strategies. The main objective of this Meeting was to assess what the companies that have adhered to the B&B philosophy as part of the protocols they have signed with ICNB have done so far in this respect.

The United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) is a global partnership between the United Nations and the financial sector. UNEP FI works closely with over 170 financial institutions and a range of partner organizations to develop linkages between the environment, sustainability and financial performance.

IUCN is engaged in private sector partnership since more than a decade in particular with Shell, ICMM, Holicm, Rio Tinto, etc. Working with these companies on mainstreaming biodiversity into their core businesses as well as assessing their biodiversity impacts.

ECNC is also involved in this area of work and focuses on businesses and economic development including biodiversity assessment of operational management and sustainability policies. The Forest Stewardship Council is a non-governmental organization promoting the responsible management of the world's forests. It is the answer to concerns over global deforestation; FSC is promoting responsible forest management worldwide.

Questions:

The general questions are how, why and when?

- What is in it for the private sector?
- What are the benefits for companies?
- How these partnerships are set up, structured?

Further Reading and References:

1. IUCN website on business
http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/bbp_aboutus/bbp_case/
2. High Level Conference on Business and Biodiversity <http://www.countdown2010.net/article/high-level-conference-on-business-biodiversity>
3. Leaders for Nature <http://leadersfornature.pbwiki.com/frontPage>
4. Business and Biodiversity Offsets www.forest-trend.org/biodiversityoffsetprogram
5. Global Reporting Industry (GRI) www.globalreporting.org
6. IUCN Private Sector Knowledge Network
www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/bbp_our_work/other_act
7. Business in Good Company <http://www.gtz.de/en/unternehmen/23543.htm>
8. UNEPFI <http://www.unepfi.org/about/index.html>
9. ECNC <http://www.ecnc.org/business?PHPSESSID=feb7265b6e4d5c48b2c24640c3732170>
10. FSC <http://www.fsc.org/about-fsc.html>