

## *Environment cooperation with CIS States*

# Financing Biodiversity – Protection of Ecosystems

The activities of the Environment for Europe process in countries not applying for membership of the EU have changed in the course of the EU eastern enlargement. The relevant CIS environment strategy is due to be adopted at the conference in Kiev for the improvement of environmental conditions in CIS States. It lists a range of priority areas for action where progress must be made before the next Environment for Europe ministerial conference by national efforts on the part of the 12 CIS States and through international cooperation. Switzerland is particularly involved in the following areas of environment cooperation:

## **1. Increasing funding for biodiversity**

Biodiversity provides an **essential service to society** particularly in the areas of ecological balance, food safety or medical research. Despite the large number of national and international action plans, biodiversity everywhere continues to decline at an alarming rate. Any conservation measures are at present mostly funded by the public sector. Other sources of funding must be found in order to increase and complement these efforts on behalf of biodiversity.

With this in mind, Switzerland along with other partners launched the European Biodiversity Resourcing Initiative at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002). The main objective of this Initiative is to increase financial investments in programmes for conserving diversity in Europe, particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, by encouraging collaboration between public and private financial institutions. The aims of this Initiative have been fully acknowledged in that it has been incorporated into the Resolution on Biodiversity to be signed in Kiev.

**Two priorities** were set last April by a taskforce chaired by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD):

To study the feasibility of setting up an EBRD-managed investment fund to finance biodiversity. Other interested institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB), Rabobank (Netherlands), government and NGOs would also contribute.

To develop a European Partnership with financial and other institutions wishing to become actively involved in the implementation of the Kiev Resolution on biodiversity by signing a declaration of intention.

**Enterprises in transition economies that are committed to preserving biodiversity** have two distinct needs: technical assistance for the creation of new enterprises, and financial support by means of loans or contributions to investments to provide young markets, where such resources are rare, with capital.

The European Biodiversity Resourcing Initiative aims to show that investments can be made towards the guaranteeing of the enormous natural resources. It should also encourage the provision of new capital to be used on our common natural heritage.

## **2. Remediation, access to water and protection of ecosystems**

**The strategic partnership on water and sustainable development in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia** is a major part of the environmental strategy to be adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Environment in Kiev and implements the three objectives in relation to water that were defined in Johannesburg:

to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015

to halve the number of people with no basic sanitation by 2015

to draw up integrated management plans for water resources in the watersheds of rivers and streams, lakes and underground waters by 2005.

One person in seven across Europe does not have access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. In fact, from Portugal to the Urals water management is a long way from implementation.

In this regard, since all the main watersheds are transboundary, SAEFL's top priority is to be instrumental in bringing about the implementation of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its Protocol on Water and Health.

The first step, however, in ensuring that people have a sufficient amount of safe water is the protection and sustainable use of ecosystems such as forests, wetlands and soils which collect, filter, store and redistribute the water. Human activities such as agriculture and the development of built-up areas have always destroyed or seriously damaged these ecosystems. Fifty per cent (50%) of the earth's wetlands disappeared in the 20th century. One third of the watersheds of rivers and lakes have lost 75% of their primary forest cover. Mountain forests disappear far more quickly than any other type of forest.

At the Third World Water Forum held in March in Kyoto, Switzerland was successful in having this new "ecosystemic" approach of world water policy adopted. It will continue its task of persuasion in Kiev for the protection of ecosystems to become an integral part of each water-related project. Ecosystem protection already figures in the environmental strategy to be adopted in Kiev. However, the ecosystemic approach will need to be implemented across Europe.