

Europe's biodiversity conservation government and academic community came together in Minsk, Belarus on 21-22 May 2015 for a landmark conference to discuss new approaches towards biodiversity conservation and ensure that they lead in defining what the future of European biodiversity policies and strategies look like.

The International Conference "The New Approaches Towards Biodiversity Conservation" was hosted and organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Republic of Belarus in a partnership with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the United Nations Development Programme in the Republic of Belarus, and with financial support from the European Union and the Global Environment Facility.

The event was dedicated to the International Day for Biological Diversity that is celebrated annually on 22 May worldwide. The Conference was a part of the XIII National Environmental Forum.

Reference:

The International Day for Biological Diversity 2015 was going under the theme "Biodiversity for Sustainable Development".

The Conference served as an international communication platform that invited representatives of national government agencies, academic institutions, NGOs and international organizations to share experience and new knowledge on the issues of biodiversity conservation in Belarus and the rest of the Europe with a particular focus on the following:

- Combating bush encroachment and overgrowth of meadows and wetlands.
- Sustainable management of European bison and aquatic warbler, as well as other wildlife globally endangered species.
- Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into design and management of construction activities at natural ecosystems.
- Introducing biodiversity conservation practices into forest management.
- Conserving wildlife by applying "wilderness" approach.
- Using remote sensing data and modern geographical information technologies in ensuring preservation of valuable natural complexes and objects.

- Managing habitats of rare bird species.
- Designing and managing the system of wardens at the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas.

The Conference was attended by a number of distinguished guest-speakers, including Ms. Maira Mora — the Ambassador, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Sanaka Samarasingha — the UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus, Mr. Jacques Trouvilliez — the Secretary General of the Secretariat of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (Germany), Mr. Eugene Lapointe — the President of the World Trust Fund IWMC (Switzerland), Ms. Olga Buto — the Climate Change Officer at FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (Hungary), Ms. Wanda Olech — the Coordinator and President of the European Bison Conservation Center (EBCC) and Chairman of the European Bison Friends Society, (Poland), Mr. Thomas Huber — the Expert of the Centre for Wildlife Ecology and Landscape Management (Austria), Mr. Alexandre Czajkowski — the Director of the European Institute for the Management of Wild Birds and their Habitats in Eastern Europe (France), Ms. Tatiana Minaeva — the International Expert for Wetlands International (Netherlands), Mr. Zymantas Morkvėnas — the Director of the Baltic Environmental Forum (Lithuania), Mr. Rafal Kowalczyk — the Director of the Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Poland), Ms. Zuzanna Nowak — the Researcher at the research chair in Genetics and Animals Management of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences at the Department of Genetics and Livestock of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (Poland), Mr. Marek Balcerak — the Head of the Laboratory for Economics and Animal Breeding of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (Poland), Mr. Liutauras Raudonikis — the Director at the Lithuanian Ornithological Society (Lithuania), Mr. Jarosław Krogulec — the International Coordinator for implementation of Memorandum on coordinating activities for Aquatic Warbler conservation (Poland) and Belarus participants.

The Conference also featured a round-table discussion that focused on the issue of Belarus' joining the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement. Mr. Jacques Trouvilliez, the AEWA's Secretary General, contributed to the round-table discussion. Representatives of interested organizations could familiarize themselves with experts' views on the issue and explore the experience of countries that already joined the Agreement.

The Conference's second day, 22 May 2015, opened up with greetings on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity and featured the unique side event: the official presentation of the a commemorative coin "Least Moonwort" minted as a part of a numismatic series "Rare Plants Revived" issued by the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus in December 2014. The coin is the second issue in the series, dedicated to rare wildlife plants that were considered extinct, but in recent years have been rediscovered at the territory of the Republic of Belarus.