

## FINAL DECLARATION

Participants in the European Conference on Invasive Alien Species, held in Madrid on January 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008, would like to express their satisfaction with the development of this scientific and institutional meeting, and recognize the relevance of the information shared during the sessions, which is the result of the work carried out by scientists, conservationists, professionals, Administration officials and NGOs, who have experience in implementing diverse initiatives and measures in response to the major threat of Invasive Alien Species.

As a result of the debates held in the working groups, the following general conclusions, reached by consensus, have been produced:

1. The threat of the Invasive Alien Species (IAS) is growing exponentially, causing damage to ecosystems and human welfare. The direct effect of invasive species includes the extinction of native species, imbalances in ecosystems and impacts on public health and the economy. Therefore, it is urgent to respond efficiently to this threat.
2. Prevention is the first and most desirable response, and for this purpose there is a need to promote technical and scientific knowledge on (i) IAS pathways of introduction, (ii) their taxonomic identification and biology, as well as (iii) the behaviour of species and their possible interactions in ecosystems.
3. Regarding the mitigation process, there is a need to invest in the establishment and implementation of early warning systems and rapid response mechanisms, in order to effectively face IAS during the first stages of their development. For those species that are beyond eradication, long term control measures are indispensable. On the other hand, it is recommended to set up protocols for action as well as containment systems in order to prevent the spread of IAS to nearby areas. The precautionary principle has to be applied.
4. It is essential to reach political commitment and to develop and implement a specific legal framework on IAS, at both the European Union and national levels, as well as to increase the financial support for its application. This framework should arise from the strengthening of the existing international legal instruments and the enhancement of coordination at the European level.
5. Codes of best practice focused on prevention should be developed. The establishment of national committees devoted exclusively to IAS could facilitate the efficient coordination and harmonized action for addressing IAS issues. The establishment of an international IAS database with regular updating is recommended as well.
6. Coordination at the appropriate level among research institutions and governmental bodies is also essential in order to design common guidelines for the detection and monitoring of existing and potential IAS.
6. Public participation should be encouraged, especially at the local level, facilitating the direct involvement of stakeholders and improving their capacities, for example by organizing forums.
7. Environmental education should be considered as a key tool to tackle invasive alien species. Therefore, there is a need to include the issue of IAS in formal and non formal education, as well as in relevant environmental education and sustainable development programmes, in order to raise awareness of the problem of biological invasions.