



**MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
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*On the occasion of*  
**WORLD CITIES DAY**  
**31 October 2016**

By 2050, an estimated 6.3 billion people will inhabit the world's towns and cities – an increase of 3.5 billion from 2010. Our planet will have undergone the largest and fastest period of urban expansion in human history, with major implications for the use of natural resources. Recent studies suggest, for example, that the global food supply will need to roughly double to meet the dietary needs of the growing population, global energy demand may increase up to 80 per cent, and global water demand is expected to increase by 55 per cent between 2000 and 2050.

Biodiversity and associated ecosystem services are critical for the quality of life and the resilience of cities. While cities occupy just 2 per cent of the Earth's surface, their inhabitants use 75 per cent of the Earth's natural resources. Cities draw on surrounding ecosystems for goods and services, and their products and emissions can affect regional and even global ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity are vital for cities to function properly. Ecosystems provide many kinds of services to the city: provisioning of food, fibre and fuels; regulating through purification, detoxification, buffering of heat islands and mitigation of droughts and floods; contributing to physical and mental health through exercise, increasing real estate value due to valuation of green spaces, and enriching the spiritual, aesthetic and social life of urban dwellers.

Enforcing the importance of biodiversity for cities, the recently concluded 2016 UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (or Habitat III) adopted a new framework that will set the world on a course towards sustainable urban development by rethinking how cities are planned, managed and inhabited. The action-oriented outcome document, known as the New Urban Agenda, enshrined now in the 'Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All,' recognizes the importance of biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides. The New Urban Agenda is a roadmap for building cities that can serve as engines of prosperity and centres of cultural and social well-being while protecting the environment. The Agenda also provides guidance for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and provides the underpinning for actions to address climate change.



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

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Among the commitments contained in the New Urban Agenda are commitments to “ensure environmental sustainability, by promoting clean energy and sustainable use of land and resources in urban development; by protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, including adopting healthy lifestyles in harmony with nature; by promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns; by building urban resilience, by reducing disaster risks; and by mitigating and adapting to climate change.” It also includes a commitment to “Readdress the way we plan, finance, develop, govern, and manage cities and human settlements, recognizing sustainable urban and territorial development as essential to the achievement of sustainable development and prosperity for all.”

If properly implemented, the New Urban Agenda can contribute not only to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris climate agreement, but also to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The UN Biodiversity Conference<sup>1</sup>, 2016, taking place in Cancun, Mexico, from 2-17 December 2016, will also consider ways to raise the awareness of subnational and local governments on the critical role they play in the conservation, preservation, sustainable use and management of biodiversity, and on how to engage them more effectively in the work of the Convention. The 5<sup>th</sup> Summit of Cities and Subnational Governments for Biodiversity, under the slogan “Mainstreaming Biodiversity where Nature Matters Most”, will showcase examples from leading cities and networks (such as ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability) and set a biannual work plan for the Advisory Committees of Cities and of Subnational Governments to support efforts by national governments and their partners.

Biodiversity underpins many ecosystem services indispensable to the functioning and prosperity of cities. Ecosystem services in urban areas are generated by ecosystems both within and outside cities. For example, nature areas in or near cities, play an important role in the provision of clean drinking water. Cities play a critical role in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and biodiversity offers solutions to the challenges of sustainable urbanization. Therefore, it is imperative that urban regions take increased responsibility for motivating and implementing solutions that take into account their profound connections with and impacts on the rest of the planet. This responsibility includes implementing the ecosystem approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the urban landscape and encouraging local governments to start a process for addressing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Ecosystems provide natural solutions to many challenges cities face by offering numerous services such as clean air, water filtration, flood prevention, noise reduction, recreation, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The major global challenges – including the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and climate change – will be solved in cities. Investing in the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems makes economic sense at the urban level. It helps to generate green jobs and business opportunities and strengthens the ability of cities to adapt to climate change and make the transition to a more healthy and sustainable future.

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<sup>1</sup> Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing, 4 to 17 December 2016; High-level Ministerial Segment of the meetings, 2 to 3 December 2016, Cancun, Mexico.