

## **Diversity for biodiversity: In the Run-up to COP9 / MOP4**

*Bärbel Dieckmann (Lady Mayor of Bonn)*



From 19 to 30 May 2008 Bonn will host the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. On 12 May the members of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety will also meet in the UN city on the Rhine river.

Both events are casting their shadows – or rather, rays of bright light as they are making themselves felt. After all, the issue of biological diversity that will be discussed has led to activities on all local levels, whose effect will begin to show before and during the conference and may reach far beyond this event.

The key for this is to be found in Bonn's special role and conception. Federal legislation has supported the development of a location for international cooperation and sustainability. In 2006 the UN campus was inaugurated and, in the meantime, 15 UN organizations are working together under the general headline "UN in Bonn – working towards sustainable development worldwide". The UN activities are supplemented by a dense network of scientific research institutes, development aid services, enterprises, media groups and internationally oriented NGOs. Most of them are working in the fields of environment and development. Several UN organizations that are based in Bonn deal directly with the issue of biodiversity - above all, the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS) as well as the United Nations University (UNU) with a focus on vulnerability.

Bonn is much more than a conference site – Bonn forms part of an interactive hub, which, as is typical for a flexible network, gains impetus through the close exchange and triggers a great number of activities and programs – beyond existing structures, organizations and hierarchies.

Bonn's biological diversity is to be seen all over the city area. 23% of the Bonn municipal region are nature conservation areas. Another 28% are considered landscape conservation areas. The traditionally densely populated Rhineland comprises a great variety of cultivated land, which is reflected by Bonn's nine nature reserves, where you will find mixed forests near a dune.

With its campaign on biological diversity, the city of Bonn is striving for a great goal: by May 2008 as many citizens as possible should have become familiar with the term "biological diversity", appreciate its great value and be aware of the contribution that we all will have to make.

The expertise, communication and education – and, as a third foundation, action and influence – are factors that are taken into account by Bonn's campaign.

Bonn is in the process of establishing its first report on biodiversity, which will bring together those many existing components of expertise, individual programs and initiatives within the administration and the scientific community.

The groups and organisations involved in the Bonn biodiversity campaign bring their activities together under a joint appearance (logo and event calendar). So the events regarding biological diversity are easy to be recognized. A special program focuses on children, youngsters, educationalists and teachers, who, in turn, will be trained as disseminators. At a later time during the run-up to the conference, there will be numerous offers to the general public, which take up people's everyday lives and put the global context into a more concrete perspective.

Action and the exertion of influence are taking place locally in single projects and through the commitment of the administration - however, also on a global basis through an international network. Immediately before the conference's high level segment from 25 to 27 May, the city of Bonn will invite mayors from all over the world in order to develop a local

action plan on biodiversity for cities. This initiative complements our involvement in the meeting on cities and biodiversity held in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2007, at the invitation of Mayor Richa, with the participation of Mayor Matsubara of Nagoya, and Mayor Tremblay of Montreal. Together, we feel that we can make a difference to protect biodiversity.

The cities constitute an important factor for the successful achievement of the goals as laid down in the CBD. More than half of the world's population currently lives in the city. This is where these people work, this is the focal point of their life and this is where they intend to shape their future. If biological diversity is lost, it will mean an indirect threat to the future of all these people as well.

If nobody feels responsible in person, there will be no perceivable change. This is why the cities must adopt responsibility and take action. At the same time, they should encourage their citizens to become involved in the protection of biological diversity, as a matter of course in their everyday lives. Every small contribution makes a difference. Cities are in a position where they can lead people to become a driving force for change. Everybody can become involved at his or her place in life.

It became apparent throughout the last few weeks and months: it is diversity that supports diversity. It is only if all parts of society and all nations of our planet will take a joint effort, that we can put up some resistance to the loss of biological diversity and achieve a fair distribution and use.

We can gain a lot from diversity: it is colorful and lively – and it is worth to take action for its preservation. Diversity has shaped us and we have shaped diversity. Diversity is valuable and diversity will never come back, once we have allowed its loss.

Diversity is an issue of sustainability which moves and thrills – this is what we felt during our preliminary meetings and wish to pass on.

Striving for diversity with diversity – Bonn is looking forward to May 2008!