



## PRESS STATEMENT

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**Biodiversity and Climate Change: NOW is the time to make the connections at all levels**

### *Panel Conclusion:*

***To date the United Nations has driven two separate global agenda's regarding climate change and biodiversity. Participants at the open session today made a very clear and unambiguous call that these two critical global issues need to be better integrated as they are inextricably linked.***

Scientific Experts and Political Leaders from around the world joined on Wednesday 9 December 2009 at the Local Government Lounge, hosted by ICLEI at the UNFCCC COP15, to highlight the important connection between climate change and biodiversity.

The event was facilitated by Kobie Brand, ICLEI Africa Regional Director and LAB Global Coordinator, who presented the current status of the ICLEI / IUCN Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) Initiative. In doing so, ICLEI announced its intent to launch a new initiative global mobilisation activity called "the Local Government Biodiversity Roadmap" that will advocate for the adoption of a comprehensive Plan of Action for Local Biodiversity Action at the UN CBD COP10 set to take place in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010. This roadmap process will build on ICLEI's successful climate roadmap process currently running at the UN FCCC COP15 in Copenhagen and is aimed at strengthening the crucial role of cities and local governments in biodiversity protection (see [www.iclei.org/lab](http://www.iclei.org/lab) for more information).

During the session, a panel comprised of scientific experts, practitioners and local leaders addressed key biodiversity and climate linkages. Panel members included:

Professor Thomas Elmqvist (Natural Resource Management, Stockholm University), Mr. Tim Christophersen (Programme Officer for Forest Biodiversity, SCBD), Mr. Gregg Oelofse (Head: Environmental Policy and Strategy, Cape Town and member of the LAB Pilot Project Steering Committee), Ms. Cecilia Njenga (Human Settlements Officer, UN-Habitat) and Ms. Naomi Tsur (Deputy Mayor: Planning and Environment Portfolio, Jerusalem).

The panelists recognised the multiple linkages between environmental issues such as biodiversity protection, climate change, urbanization, and poverty alleviation. They emphasized the need to recognise that earth is not a mechanism; but indeed a very complex system that humans tamper with on a daily basis. Biodiversity and climate change are inextricably linked and this connection need to be reinforced on an international and at local level. Suggested paths for improvement included relevant capacity building, environmental education, community-based decision-making and direct investment in the environment.

Mr. Christophersen initiated highlighted the role of cities and the need to reduce their carbon footprints by referring to a study of The Nature Conservancy and Harvard University in 2008 which indicated that at the current pace of urbanization, natural resources and ecosystems would, by 2030, be severely damaged. He said that the projected acceleration of urbanisation only adds to climatic stresses such as habitat fragmentation and, given the threats associated with climate change, need to be considered more that ever, in a context of the need for resilient ecosystem.

David Cadman, President of ICLEI alerted delegates to act on the need for integrated approaches towards a multitude of sustainability issues at local level such as climate change, energy and water security and biodiversity. He continued by stating, "There is a line that runs through all of them and the worry is that if we don't look at all of this, we're going to forget the big picture".

The Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Naomi Tsur, brought this relationship to the forefront by reminding those in attendance, that the issues surrounding climate change were initiated upon the realization of how it is "threatening life on earth" and that "somewhere along the line, the value of nature and biodiversity got lost".

On the global level, the importance of biodiversity and "the role of ecosystems in assisting the world towards achieving a green economy" was explained by Professor Thomas Elmqvist who went on to say that now is the time for connection between UN conventions to be made and to "bring biodiversity meaningfully into the discussion on climate change". Ms. Cecilia Njenga from UN HABITAT highlighted that these new challenges need to be faced with new approaches such as the development of innovative tools, dynamics, and networks for successful environmental policies. She stated, "biodiversity is an opportunity to bring different stakeholders together such as

conservationists, scientists and politicians in an integrated manner in order to address environmental sustainable development and planning”.

Speaking for a city perspective, Gregg Oelofse from Cape Town said, “Local governments often feel as if they need to make a choice between development and the environment. We as local governments need to move forward in a way that integrates both issues and shift away from this current competitive concept”. The City of Cape Town has recently completed a resource economic study that has proved that “better returns are achieved from investments made in the natural environment than from any other”.

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