



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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ENGAGING THE CITIES OF THE WORLD IN THE BATTLE FOR LIFE ON EARTH

Montreal, 28 March 2007. In 1950, only three of the world's most populous cities were in developing countries. Currently, only three of the world's most populous cities are in rich countries. Cities occupy two per cent of the planet's surface but their residents use 75 per cent of the Earth's natural resources. The megacities of the world can today be included among the richest countries with regard to biodiversity.

The impact cities have on biodiversity is a major concern as the health of both populations and ecosystems is affected by unsound urban management. However, urbanization also has the potential to contribute positively to human development and to the protection of the environment.

In March 2006, the city of Curitiba, often referred to as the environmental laboratory of Brazil and one of the most environmentally-friendly cities in the world, hosted the largest biodiversity gathering in the life of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). A new era of enhanced phase of implementation of the Convention on life on Earth was born and calls for the active engagement of all stakeholders, including local authorities.

At the initiative of the Mayor of Curitiba, Mr. Carlos Alberto Richa, a meeting on "Cities and Biodiversity" was held from 26 to 28 March 2007. Over 70 participants, including 34 mayors and top city officials from around the world, attended this important event.

Biodiversity challenges that are specific to cities, such as the provision of appropriate urban infrastructure, sustainable transportation, adequate waste management and minimized industrial pollution, constitute some of the most urgent issues on the local, national, regional, and international levels, and are, to a large extent, within the cities' jurisdiction. Therefore, the involvement of local authorities in the global effort to protect all forms of life on Earth is essential.

During the meeting, participants exchanged experiences and best practices on biodiversity and agreed on a set of actions for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target, which aims to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional, and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and other Millennium Development Goals.

The Curitiba Declaration, adopted by this first-ever meeting on cities and biodiversity within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, reaffirms the urgency to achieve its objectives in the urban world and to engage local authorities for the battle of life on Earth. Particular emphasis was placed on raising public awareness and educating new generations, as well as disseminating best practices and lessons learned through cooperation between cities. The establishment of a clearing house mechanism in the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as a forum for exchange of experiences, was recommended.

The mayors' concerns will be conveyed to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in May 2008 in Bonn, Germany, with the expected participation of more than 100 environmental ministers from around the world.

The participants mandated the steering committee, comprising Mr. Richa, Mayor of Curitiba, Mr. Tremblay, Mayor of Montreal, Mrs. Dieckman, Lady Mayor of Bonn, and Mr. Takehisa, Mayor of Nagoya, and the City Government of Johannesburg, to take the lead in engaging local authorities in the implementation of the Convention, and to participate in the municipal pre-conference of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in May 2008 in Bonn.



In response to the unprecedented challenges of global biodiversity loss, Mayor Richa of Curitiba called for “the active engagement of local authorities,” and added that he was “very pleased to announce Curitiba’s groundbreaking Biocities Initiative.” The initiative, a US\$ 175 million project, uses an enhanced participatory approach to create parkways and linear parks, and to protect watersheds.

Montreal Mayor Tremblay stated: “Biodiversity is the future of humanity. The rapid loss of biodiversity poses an environmental challenge of a global nature as serious as climate change. This message needs to be conveyed to stakeholders, United Nations agencies, national Governments, local authorities, development agencies, private sector partners, non-governmental organizations, knowledge and research institutions, and multilateral organizations, through one united voice. All citizens of the world must be empowered to translate this responsibility and obligation in their daily life as the priority of priorities.”

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: “The year 2007 marks a paradigm shift in human history. For the first time, urban population exceeds rural population. Cities are growing mainly in developing countries, countries that are poor in terms of finances, but very rich in terms of biodiversity. As a result, the battle for life on Earth will be won or lost in cities. The Curitiba city and biodiversity initiative is a major contribution to ensuring that cities are part of the solution in response to biodiversity challenges facing the world.”

For more information: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=MAYORS-01>.

Information for Journalists:

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most broadly subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, it currently has 190 Parties—189 States and the European Community—who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal.

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