



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



COMMUNIQUÉ

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

Montreal 25 June 2008. The growth of the urban world represents one of the most dramatic changes experienced by humanity in recent history. For the first time in history, the world's urban population is now greater than that of rural areas, having reached 3.2 billion people. It has increased nearly fourfold since 1950. Every year, more than 50 million people, the equivalent of the populations of Spain and Portugal combined, are added to the population of the world's cities. It is predicted that, in 2030, four out of five of the world's urban dwellers will live in developing countries. Cities occupy 2 per cent of the planet's surface, but their residents use 75 per cent of the Earth's natural resources.

If not managed adequately, the growth of the urban population may accelerate the unprecedented loss of biodiversity of our planet. However, the loss of biodiversity is not inevitable, and the unsound urban management is not the unavoidable destiny of cities. Sound urbanization and environmentally well managed cities can exist.

Some 5,000 participants attended the first-ever World Cities Summit, held on 24-25 June 2008 in Singapore, the city-state. The Summit coincided with the East Asia Summit Conference on Liveable Cities comprising 16 countries, as well as well the first Singapore Water Week attended by 400 participating companies from 40 countries. The meeting was opened by Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, who had announced the convening of this first-ever event at the high-level segment of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007.

The meeting was informed of the Bonn initiative on cities and biodiversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Fifty mayors, from 30 countries, representing over 100 million urban dwellers met in Bonn on 26-27 May 2008 the under the theme "Local Action for Biodiversity" to underline the importance of urban biodiversity. The "Bonn Call for Action" was submitted to the high-level segment held with the participation of Heads of State and Government and more than 100 ministers of the environment. For the first time ever, for any United Nations environmental convention, cities spoke at the highest-level forum, thus setting a precedent for future meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and other related intergovernmental processes.

At the same time, 400 scientists, planners and other practitioners adopted the Erfurt Declaration "Urbio 2008" at the first-ever international conference on Networking, Urban ecology, Urban biodiversity and design for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Towns and Cities. As a result, the 5,000 participants at the Bonn meeting representing 191 Parties adopted, for the first time, a decision on cities and biodiversity—decision IX/28.

This decision encourages the 191 Parties to the Convention to recognize the role of cities in national strategies and plans, and invites Parties to support and assist cities in implementing the Convention at local level. Indeed, one of the greatest achievements of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties is the recognition that the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity requires the full engagement of cities and local authorities. To this end, a plan of action on cities and biodiversity will be submitted to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Nagoya



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City, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, in October 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity. A Nagoya Summit on Cities and Biodiversity will be convened during the meeting.

In addressing the participants in this historic event, Dr Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the Convention, stated that: “While cities are today part of the problem of the current unprecedented loss of biodiversity, they are also part of the solution. Indeed, the fight for life on Earth will be won or lost in cities. The hearts of citizen must be won. Local authorities have a major role to play, as global change starts at the local level.”

Dr. Djoghlaif paid tribute to Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, for the decision announced during his opening address to establish a Centre for Liveable Cities, and he suggested elevating this innovative institution whose time has come into a collaborative centre of excellence for the development and implementation of the Convention’s work programme on cities and biodiversity. He welcomed the offer of Singapore to host in January 2009 a panel of experts to prepare a City Biodiversity Index to monitor the implementation of the guidelines of implementing the three objectives of the Convention to be developed at a meeting to be held in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2009.

During his visit to Singapore, the Executive Secretary had a meeting with Mah Bow Tan, the Minister of National Development of Singapore, to further discuss the preparation, in consultation with the members of the steering committee of the Curitiba initiative on cities and biodiversity—comprising the mayors of Curitiba, Bonn, Montreal, Nagoya and Singapore—of the Convention’s initiative on cities and biodiversity. Meetings were also held with the head of the delegation of Nagoya City, the Mayor of Wellington, New Zealand, and the Deputy Mayor for Political Affairs of Busan Metropolitan City of the Republic of Korea.

The Executive Secretary also had discussions with the Vice-Minister of Brunei Darussalam regarding Secretariat support to his country following its recent accession as the 191st Party to the Convention.
