

Intervention by Mr. Gino Van Begin, Secretary General of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability

Mr President, Your Excellencies

I am pleased to share with you that this year, those 726 cities reporting to our carbonn Climate Registry have already committed to reducing their emissions by more than 1 gigaton of CO2 equivalent (GtCO2e) by 2020. Let's also imagine what such bold, voluntary and collectively inspired local action in the field of biodiversity can mean!

Ecosystem services are vital for the survival of humankind, and nowhere else is this manifested more concretely than in our cities. Our rapidly growing urban population, are wittingly and often unwittingly – reshaping those very ecosystems on which we depend for resilience, well-being and indeed, for the most basic of our daily needs such as food, shelter and connectivity.

Mr President, on behalf of ICLEI and our network of 1500 local and subnational governments, I would like to congratulate the CBD Parties on a decade of accelerated and consecutive COP Decisions in recognition of the increasingly important and urgent role of cities and regions as essential contributors to the attainment of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its' associated Aichi Targets.

Local and subnational governments have an imperative to take action and are best placed to do so through cross-cutting and mainstreamed nature-based solutions at the local level.

It is in cities that some of our most pressing biodiversity challenges culminate to impact directly on local economies, and are in places already stretching vulnerable urban communities beyond breaking point.

Yet our cities are simultaneously, and in multiple ways, gateways to achievable, measurable and transformative biodiversity gains. **Cities designed, built and managed in recognition of, and in harmony with nature, provide us with truly transformative platforms towards an inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable planet.**

Along with provinces, prefectures, regions and states, they are home to some of the most biodiverse areas on earth. Connecting communities with their national governments, local and subnational governments are pivotal in enabling the vertical integration needed to implement nationally-set policies. They are best placed to translate these policies and associated targets into locally implementable and measurable strategies and actions.

So, what do we need now:

Building on our messages to CBD Parties since COP10, respectively through the *Bonn Call for Action, Aichi/Nagoya and Hyderabad Declarations and the 2014 Gangwon/Pyeongchang Resolution and on CBD COP Decisions IX/28, X/22, XI/8 and XII/9,*

ICLEI now calls for further action by nations and the international community to work with your local and subnational governments to collectively implement these commitments. **If all nations formally recognize and incorporate local and subnational commitments into national action plans, they may see immediate opportunities to scale up delivery on, and even raise, national targets.**

ICLEI also calls for strong frameworks that directly support local and subnational governments. Proper financial and capacity building support is now essential to ensure that a growing number of cities, towns and regions can follow a longer term biodiversity action planning horizon.

Local and subnational governments are indeed vital partners in shaping and implementing the new international architecture and associated trajectory embarked on recently through the *SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and others.*

On behalf of local and subnational governments, our networks and our valued partners, we are honoured and excited to convene, with our Mexican government hosts - notably through CONABIO - and with the CBD Secretariat, the **5th Global Biodiversity Summit of Cities and Subnational Governments** in parallel with COP13 on 10 and 11 December 2016 here in Cancun, bringing together more than 700 governors, mayors and other participants from over 73 countries.

In closing, I hereby call on the Parties to the CBD and the international community gathered at COP13 to increase collaboration and further support biodiversity action at the local level. Let us take hands to unlock the potential of cities and regions to unlock new, and scale up existing projects, programmes and initiatives for combined local action for biodiversity.

Mr President, I thank you for the opportunity to address you today and wish you productive deliberations over the next two weeks.

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