

**Statement by the European Committee of the Regions, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Regions4 Sustainable Development, the Group of Leading Subnational Governments toward Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments for Biodiversity
(coordinated by Regions4 and the Government of Quebec)**

**In the Special Virtual Session for SBSTTA 24 and SBI-3 on Biodiversity, One Health and COVID on
15/16th December 2020**

Speaker: Mr Roby Biwer, European Committee of the Regions

Category: Subnational and local governments

Honorable Chairs, and distinguished delegates,

We address you on behalf of subnational and local governments and networks, including the European Committee of Regions, ICLEI, the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments - coordinated by Regions4 and the Government of Quebec, and the Group of Leading Subnational Governments toward Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

COVID-19 has reminded us of the increased risk of zoonotic diseases from unsustainable interactions between human and natural systems. Going forward, we need to redesign our cities and regions to recover healthy biodiversity and ecosystem services that are vital for human health and its well-being based on a socioeconomic system that is in harmony with nature.

Cities and subnational governments currently stand in the frontlines of the pandemic, and are key actors in taking urgent and concrete actions across all sectors. We take the nature, health and climate agendas, and the One Health approach, very seriously.

The Convention can further contribute to a One Health approach by supporting the formal recognition by Parties of the action that local and subnational governments are already taking at their level.

Going forward, we need to redesign our cities and regions to recover healthy biodiversity and ecosystem services that are vital for human health and its well-being based on a socioeconomic system that is in harmony with nature.

The inclusion of local and subnational governments in the development and implementation of the recovery measures and approaches will ensure that these responses to COVID-19 contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to "build back better".

The interlinkages between biodiversity, health and pandemic risk should be reflected in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework as suggested by the Edinburgh Declaration. For example, by strengthening capacity building and increasing resource mobilisation in order to implement nature-based solutions (NBS) and green and blue infrastructure, particularly through ecosystem based approaches at the local and subnational levels.

I conclude by reiterating that cities and subnational governments are ready, and want to be part of the solution to **build back better** and **redesign our shared future in harmony with nature** within planetary boundaries, with CBD Parties, and through a whole of government and a whole of society approach. Thank you. [362 words]