



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/10
18 December 2007

ENGLISH ONLY

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Ninth meeting

Bonn, 19-30 May 2008

Item 4.13 of the provisional agenda*

CITIES AND BIODIVERSITY: ENGAGING LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The year 2007 marked a major shift in the history of humanity. For the first time, the world's urban population exceeded its rural population. Thus humans are becoming increasingly an urban species and today more than 50% of the world's population lives in cities. Two centuries ago, this number was 3%. Most of this evolution is occurring in developing countries, which host the largest part of the planet's biodiversityⁱ. Thus, the impact of cities on biodiversity is becoming an increasing concern as urban environment consumes more natural resources. "A city may represent as little as 0.1% of the area of the host ecosystems that sustain it"ⁱⁱ. Urban sprawling is directly impacting on the surrounding hinterland as green belts are being converted to other land uses. Industrial emissions and increased motorized transport in cities is severely affecting both the health of ecosystems and of urban populations.

2. However, urbanization can contribute positively to human development. Highly urbanized countries often enjoy higher incomes, more stable economies, and stronger institutions. Cities are the territorial bases of the global economy. Thus, they produce a large share of gross domestic product and offer vast opportunities for employment and investment, both in developed and developing countries. In addition, cities often provide more access to services and generally perform well on several human development indicators, such as literacy and life expectancy.

3. Links between local authorities and the protection of biodiversity must be included in the development of targeted actions towards conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at the global scale. Primary direct threats to biodiversity are most of the time related to public services and instruments that are the responsibility of local governments. Threats such as infrastructure development, conversion of natural habitats to other land uses, over harvesting and overexploitation of natural resources, introduction of invasive alien species, and pollution are interconnected with public provision of energy, water, rubbish collection, sanitation, and are regulated under land-use planning legislation. With exception of the provision of energy, which is a national government function, local governments operate all of the above services and legislationⁱⁱⁱ.

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4. Cities can contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the CBD through conservation and sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services in urban planning and management. Local governments tend to be responsible for functions and services that are associated with biodiversity issues. Among 40 countries that have responded the OECD/World Bank survey on budget practices and procedures^{iv} about the assignment of functions or mandates among different levels of government, an average of 60% of respondents said that local governments (included in the subnational category of the study) are mainly responsible for (1) rubbish collection, (2) local transport, (3) sanitation, (4) fire prevention, (5) waters, (6) local police, and (7) primary and secondary education. Another study based on 12 cities around the world (Lima, 2007: 121-146) suggests an even more extensive list of cities' mandates and functions. It confirms OECD/World Bank findings but includes (8) health, (9) social assistance, (10) environment, (11) housing, (12) culture, (13) sports, (14) economic development, (15) information technology infrastructure^v. All of these city functions are interconnected with the main direct drivers of biodiversity loss and solutions to such degradation.

5. The present note has been prepared as a background document to describe the next steps envisaged for engaging cities in the implementation of the Convention. Section II gives an overview of the process, which led to the Curitiba meeting on cities and biodiversity, and section III presents the lessons learned at this meeting. Section IV explains how some cities are already getting involved through international organizations, initiatives and networks, section V presents the proposed Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity as a way to coordinate actions and achieve results, while section VI outlines how COP 9 can examine the issue of cities and biodiversity. Annex I contains the Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity.

II. THE MEETING ON CITIES AND BIODIVERSITY

6. After initial exchanges between Mr. Carlos Alberto Richa, the Mayor of Curitiba, and the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, the City of Curitiba organized and sponsored a meeting on "Cities and Biodiversity: Achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Target", which allowed several cities to begin working together on this very important issue. To assist in the preparation and servicing of the meeting, as well as to ensure the follow-up of its outcomes, an Inter-Agency Task Force on Cities and Biological Diversity (TF) was established. The TF is composed of representatives of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), United Nations Institute on Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Conservation Union (through Countdown 2010), ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (through the Local Action for Biodiversity project), Government of Brazil, and Curitiba City Government. The TF's terms of reference are attached to this document as annex 1. Members of the TF met six times, via teleconference, respectively on 10 November 2006, 7 December 2006, 12 February 2007, 5 March 2007, 9 March 2007, and 18 June 2007.

7. The Curitiba meeting was attended by 70 participants from 24 cities and international organizations in seven countries and four continents. A total of 18 case-studies were presented, each under one of the five following themes: (1) integrating biodiversity into urban planning; (2) promoting biodiversity-friendly urban development; (3) managing urban biodiversity; (4) ensuring that business practices enhance biodiversity; and (5) promoting awareness of biodiversity to urban communities.

8. The meeting resulted in the adoption of the Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity, which reaffirmed the cities' commitment to contribute to the implementation of the Convention and its 2010 biodiversity target (see the annex to the present document). Through this document, participants mandated the Mayor of Curitiba, the Mayor of Montreal, the Mayor of Bonn, and the Mayor of Nagoya (Japan) to act as a Steering Committee in order to develop synergies between existing associations and the TF, to carry a strong message, and to follow up through concrete projects, awareness campaigns, and exchange of best practices. The document also invites the mayors of the Steering Committee and the

Mayor of Johannesburg to work together to present the results of the meeting in Curitiba at the Municipal Pre-Conference and the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in Bonn in May 2008.

III. LESSONS FROM CURITIBA

9. The meeting on “Cities and Biodiversity: Achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Target” allowed participants to exchange best practices and discuss relevant initiatives that aim to achieve the objectives of the Convention. Numerous interesting ideas were presented.

10. Thinking that cities are deprived of natural resources is a common misconception. On the contrary, they can be home to a large number of species. For instance, the City of São Paulo (Brazil) has 33 urban parks and a green belt around the city, classified as a Biosphere Reserve, housing 47 endemic species of mammals, as well as 31 species of reptiles and 40 species of amphibians. Furthermore, Nairobi National Park (Kenya) is home to over 400 species of birds. In terms of plant diversity, the City of Cape Town (South Africa) hosts over 2,300 plant species.

11. Two main points emerged at the Curitiba meeting. First, biodiversity renders essential services to cities. The environment provides food, freshwater, and medicine. It also supports livelihoods, notably in developing countries, as well as major economic industries, such as fishing, agriculture, and tourism. Moreover, it provides essential services such as erosion control, climate regulation, pollution control, flood regulation, disease regulation, nutrient cycling, pest regulation, carbon sequestration, and air quality regulation. Last but not least, nature contributes to quality of life of urban citizens by offering places for recreation, for both body and mind. In addition, its aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural values are indisputable. In 2003, the eThekweni Municipality of Durban (South Africa) valued environmental goods and services at R3.1 billion (1US\$=R8) per annum (excluding the contribution to the tourism sector, which is R3.5 billion per annum). Concerning climate regulation, for instance, hourly monitoring of temperature levels in Nagoya (Japan) allowed the city to demonstrate that forest cover is essential for keeping temperatures at lower levels. Nagoya’s reforestation programme has been proven to reduce day temperatures by up to 4 degrees Celsius. Sao Paulo observed a difference of 8 degrees Celsius between forested and non-forested areas.

12. Second, urban planning is one of the key strategies in the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity. Dr. Jaime Lerner, urban planner and former Mayor of Curitiba stated that “cities are not the problem, they are the solution”. They can develop programmes, projects and legislation that integrate biodiversity concerns into urban planning. The cities’ jurisdiction encompasses several sectors of vital importance to sustainable development, such as waste management and transportation. The groundbreaking US\$ 175 million “BioCity” programme, launched by the City of Curitiba, constitutes a concrete example of urban planning that takes into consideration biodiversity-related issues. BioCity is composed of five main projects related to: (1) ornamental indigenous plant species, aiming to promote knowledge and familiarity with the region’s indigenous flora through the reintroduction of ornamental species within the city; (2) conservation units, with the active participation of civil society; (3) preservation of water resources, through the Strategic Plan for Revitalizing the Barigüi River Basin; (4) tree-lining streets, which facilitates planting of indigenous species along Curitiba streets; and (5) air quality/mobility and transportation, through the Green Line Project, which aims to revitalize an important federal highway and create a major transportation corridor with special lanes for bicycles and pedestrians as well as a linear park.

13. Many innovative, efficient, and socially inclusive examples were discussed. For instance, under the theme “Integrating biodiversity into urban planning”, the City of Bonn (Germany) discussed spatial planning and design and announced that the city had designated 51% of its space as specially protected areas. Under the theme “Managing Urban Biodiversity”, the City of Nairobi stated that their renowned national park, located within the city, attracts one million visitors annually. In addition, under

the theme “Promoting Awareness to Urban Communities”, the City of Montreal explained that its Nature Museums reach hundreds of thousands of people every year: the Montreal Botanical Garden attracts 1 million visitors per year, the Biodome attracts 800,000 people per year, and the Insectarium attracts 240,000 people per year (mostly children).

14. Sound urban planning practice can encourage higher levels of responsibility sharing among citizens for the environment. For instance, the City of Porto Alegre’s initiative to invite citizens to adopt city trees has resulted in a significant reduction of city tree mortality. With a ratio of 1 tree per inhabitant, Porto Alegre’s citizens are sharing with the city the responsibility of caring for at least their front door street tree.

15. Finally, the meeting demonstrated that partnering with local governments to implement the CBD is effective. Cities are efficient in economies of scale and partnerships. For example, in recognition of the extension of its ecological footprint, the City of Sao Paulo has signed in 2005, an agreement with the Greenpeace, under which it commits itself to consume, only certified Amazonian timber, for public purposes. As the region of Sao Paulo consumes up to 14% of timber from the Amazon forest, by eliminating purchase of uncertified timber, the city expects to reduce illegal deforestation, which in the Amazon region reaches up to 47% of total timber produced^{vi}.

IV. CITIES ARE GETTING INVOLVED

16. Cities have drawn a lot of attention internationally with respect to their involvement on climate change issues. The World Mayor’s Council on Climate Change^{vii}, initiated by the Mayor of Kyoto (Japan), was established following the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in February 2005. The key purposes of the Council are to: politically promote climate protection policies at the local level; foster the international cooperation of municipal leaders on achieving climate targets, strengthen the political profile and impact of the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, and help, through advocacy, make the multilateral mechanisms for global climate protection effective. The recent appointment of the Mayor of Montreal as Vice-President in charge of biodiversity confirms that the importance of the links between climate change and biodiversity is now very high on international as well as local agendas.

17. The World Conservation Union’s Countdown 2010^{viii} project represents a powerful network of active partners working together towards the 2010 biodiversity target, including local authorities who are considered as crucial allies for communicating and implementing the 2010 biodiversity target. Countdown 2010 aims to: encourage and support the full implementation of all the existing binding international commitments and necessary actions to save biodiversity; demonstrate clearly what progress Europe makes in meeting the 2010 biodiversity target; and gain maximum public attention across Europe for the challenge of saving biodiversity by 2010. Tilburg (Netherlands) led the way by being the first city to join the Countdown 2010 initiative in 2005, through Countdown 2010’s regional and local action campaign.

18. ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability^{ix} is engaged in a project called Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB), which aims to enhance urban nature through a global network of local governments. More specifically, it is an action-oriented project, linking world cities and partners, and working to ensure that biodiversity concerns become fully integrated into local planning and policy making processes, and that local governments engage in effective biodiversity protection, utilisation and management. Some of LAB’s overarching goals are to: support local biodiversity projects; increase global awareness at the local level of the importance of biodiversity; build a global momentum at local level towards the Countdown 2010 objective; develop biodiversity best practice at the local level; develop biodiversity management and implementation tools; and enhance global networks, communication and sharing between cities on biodiversity issues. 19 cities participated in phase 1 of the LAB project, including Tilburg (Netherlands), Walvis Bay (Namibia), Havana (Cuba), São Paulo (Brazil), Joondalup (Australia), Barcelona (Spain), and Seoul (Republic of Korea). In many ways, the

Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity is a natural evolution of LAB, in close cooperation with the Task Force established for this initiative.

19. The organization United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)^x represents members from 127 countries in all world regions. This organization aims to be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community. This organization shows strong interest in such issues as sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.

20. Metropolis^{xi} (World Association of Major Metropolises) constitutes the metropolitan section of UCLG and aims to promote international cooperation and exchanges among members (local and metropolitan governments). The Metropolis Association is represented by more than 90 member cities from across the world and operates as an international forum for exploring issues and concerns common to all big cities. The main goal is to better control the development process of metropolitan areas in order to enhance the well-being of citizens.

21. The Urban Biosphere Group^{xii}, formed under the aegis of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere programme (MAB) gathers scientists, planners and policy makers from the cities of Canberra, Cape Town, Istanbul, Johannesburg, New Orleans and New York to examine the applicability of the Biosphere reserve concept to urban landscapes. Biosphere reserves are sites meant to innovate and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development. Although they are under central governments jurisdiction, the knowledge learned from Biosphere reserves experience are shared regionally, nationally and internationally within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). With 529 sites worldwide in 105 countries^{xiii}, the WNBR provides context-specific opportunities to combine scientific knowledge and governance modalities to reduce biodiversity loss, to improve livelihoods, to enhance social, economic and cultural conditions for environmental sustainability. Thus, WNBR contributes to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular goal 7, on ensuring environmental sustainability.

V. A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON CITIES AND BIODIVERSITY

22. The establishment of a Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity was proposed in Curitiba, and subsequently discussed in the Task Force, to support cities in the sustainable management of their biodiversity resources, to assist cities to implement practices that support national, regional and international strategies, plans, and agendas on biodiversity, and to bring together and learn from existing initiatives. It evolves from the strengthening of cooperation between members of the Task Force, notably ICLEI's LAB project. The overall goal is to increase resilience and reduce vulnerabilities in urban landscapes through sustainable management of biodiversity within and around cities, as an implementation mechanism for COP decisions and programmes. This partnership would be composed of a combination of diverse expertise, networks, political influence, and funding sources, to achieve common goals and specific targets. The members of the partnership would consist of cities, National Governments as Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, donors, non-governmental organizations and multilateral organizations, as well as other partners, such as knowledge institutions and universities. Through activities and outputs, the partnership aims to reach a series of objectives, such as a sustained supply of ecosystem services for cities and an increased awareness and involvement on the local, national, regional and international scale.

VI. CITIES AND BIODIVERSITY AT THE NINTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

23. There is an opportunity for the adoption of a decision on cities and biodiversity at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, under agenda item 4.13, where Parties are invited to provide

guidance to the Secretariat on cooperation with other conventions and international organizations and initiatives, and engagement of stakeholders. Item 4.13 relates to goal 4.4 of the Strategic Plan, which seeks broader engagement across society in the implementation of the Convention. In addition, a decision on cities and biodiversity would support paragraph 8 (r) of the draft decision on the implementation of goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan, adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention at its second meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/4, recommendation 2/1) by which the Conference of the Parties would urge Parties to support local action by developing sub-national and local biodiversity strategies and/or action plans consistent with national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

24. A decision on cities and biodiversity would allow Parties to work with local governments and other players to better implement COP decisions and national-level biodiversity related plans and programmes. Moreover, it would endorse the work that is being carried out by the members of the Cities and Biodiversity Initiative, aiming at a Global Partnership to support cities in the sustainable management of their biodiversity resources in accordance with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

*Annex***CURITIBA DECLARATION ON CITIES AND BIODIVERSITY**

We the Mayors and other high-level officials participating in the meeting on Cities and Biodiversity held in Curitiba, Brazil, from 26 to 28 March 2007,

Recalling the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and its three objectives aimed at the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources,

Deeply concerned by the unprecedented rate of loss of biodiversity of our planet and its far-reaching environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts, exacerbated by the effects of climate change,

Deeply concerned also that the consequences of biodiversity loss and ecosystem disruption are harshest for the poor and that biodiversity loss poses a significant barrier to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal 7, to ensure environmental sustainability,

Reaffirming that healthy ecosystems provide social, economic and ecological benefits to urban areas, as well as goods and services that underpin various industries, and, thereby, the well-being of the residents of cities,

Recalling the adoption of the 2010 biodiversity target during the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, aiming to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss at the local, national and global levels, as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth,

Recalling the commitment by Heads of State in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and reflected in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to negotiate an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources (ABS),

Recalling also that, at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Curitiba, Brazil, in 2006, the Convention on Biological Diversity entered a new phase of enhanced implementation of its three objectives, and the Parties agreed to accelerate the efforts to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target and to negotiate an international regime on access and benefit sharing (ABS) at the earliest possible time before the Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in 2010,

Considering that in 2007 the majority of the Earth's population will live in cities, and that much of this growth will occur in developing countries,

Recognizing the crucial importance of the involvement of local authorities in the global efforts towards the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, as it is through local actions that biodiversity issues are addressed most efficiently,

Recognizing that particularly in the developing countries, communities are directly dependent on ecosystems goods and services provided by biodiversity,

Considering that urbanization can contribute positively to human development as cities offer many social and economic opportunities,

Underlining that urban experiences in ecosystem conservation and biodiversity protection can contribute to strengthening national policies, regional strategies, and global agendas that respond to urban needs,

Recalling that the role of local authorities was acknowledged during the 1992 Earth Summit: in adopting chapter 28 of Agenda 21, 101 Heads of State and Government recognized local authorities as key actors in sustainable development and called for the establishment of Local Agenda 21 campaigns,

Recognizing the important support provided by the inter-agency task force constituted to support this event with the participation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and IUCN—the World Conservation Union, in particular through its Countdown 2010 initiative,

Recognizing the contribution to the task force of ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability, and noting the important contribution of ICLEI's Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) Project in mobilizing key cities and promoting the exchange of experience on urban biodiversity best practices to foster the international cooperation of municipal leaders on achieving 2010 biodiversity target,

Underlining the importance of institutions such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), as well as the World Mayors' Council on Climate Change (WMCCC) and its biodiversity component, in the cooperation between local governments,

Recognizing the importance of the cooperation between key cities for the Convention on Biological Diversity, which also stand as global references for their initiatives on urban biodiversity, such as Curitiba, as host of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Bonn, as host of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Nagoya, as representative of the candidate cities for the hosting of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and Montreal as host of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity,

Considering the value and importance of the case-studies, best practices and experiences presented during this conference, which are contributions to address the issue of environmental degradation,

1. *Reaffirm* our commitment to contribute actively to the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and to the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target aimed at reducing substantially the rate of loss of the biodiversity of our planet, as well as the establishment of an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources (ABS);

2. *Reaffirm also* our resolve to integrate biodiversity concerns into urban planning and development, with a view to improving the lives of urban residents, in particular those affected by poverty, securing the livelihood base of cities and developing appropriate regulatory, implementation and decision-making mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of biodiversity plans,

3. *Further reaffirm* the urgency to act on the 2010 biodiversity target and the Millennium Development Goals to secure livelihoods for present and future generations in a sustainable way. To this end, we welcome the coming together of existing initiatives, such as Countdown 2010, Local Action for Biodiversity, and the UNEP Campaign on Cities and Biodiversity to form a global partnership of cities, national Governments, development agencies, private sector partners, non-governmental organizations, knowledge and research institutions, and multilateral organizations to address the challenges of meeting the 2010 biodiversity target and create political momentum at local level;

4. *Stress the need* to raise public awareness and change biodiversity depleting behaviour of all sectors of society through means such as dissemination of urban success stories, city-to-city cooperation, community education programmes and by celebrating International Biodiversity Day on 22 May every year as well as actively contributing to marking the 2010 International Year for Biodiversity as proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in ways which directly and indirectly enhance the lives of communities;

5. *Invite* the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to make available to larger public the case studies presented at the meeting, with a view of establishing with the support of the task force and advise of the Curitiba Steering Committee, a clearing-house mechanism for local authorities and to provide access, via its website, to information related to urban biodiversity;

6. *Encourage* UNEP to assemble a publication of case studies from around the world, on cities, ecosystems and biodiversity, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT and ICLEI;

7. *Invite* the Mayor of Montreal, as the official representative of UCLG to this event, to present the report of this meeting on cities and biodiversity to its World Congress in Jeju, South Korea, in October 2007;

8. *Invite* the Mayor of Curitiba to present the report of this meeting on cities and biodiversity to the Municipal Conference to be held from 26 to 27 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany, prior to the high-level segment of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and *invite* representatives of the Curitiba meeting to present its report to the next World Urban Forum, to be held in Nanjing, China, in 2008, and to other related events;

9. *Mandate* the Mayor of Curitiba, as the host city of the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and the Mayor of Montreal, as the host city of the Secretariat of the Convention, as well as the Mayor of Bonn, as the host city of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the Mayor of Nagoya, Japan, as the city offering to host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to act as a Steering Committee in order to develop synergies between existing associations, such as ICLEI (WMCCC) and UCLG, and the task force established for the current meeting, to carry a strong common message, and to follow up through concrete projects, awareness campaigns and exchange of best practices;

10. *Invite* the four mayors of the Steering Committee and the Mayor of Johannesburg to work together to present the results of the Curitiba and the Bonn meetings on cities and biodiversity to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held from 19 to 31 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany;

11. *Express our deep gratitude* to the city government of Curitiba, through its Mayor, city officials, and population, for the warm welcome granted to all participants in the meeting on Cities and Biodiversity, and *congratulate* the city government for its unique and innovative Biocity initiative.

Curitiba, Brazil, 28 March 2007

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^{viii} See Countdown 2010’s website for more information: <http://www.countdown2010.net/>

^{ix} See ICLEI’s website for more information: <http://www.iclei.org/>

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