



Achieving the  
**2010**  
Biodiversity  
Target

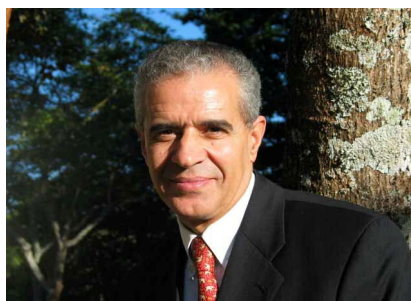
## Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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CBD

### **MESSAGE FROM AHMED DJOGLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD HABITAT DAY 2 October 2006**



Cities are places of creativity and ambition, places where people go to build better lives. But they can also be places of tragic despair. One billion people currently live in urban slums, and this number is likely to grow dramatically in the coming years. By the year 2050, more than two thirds of the world's population is expected to live in cities. As we celebrate the theme "Cities, Magnets of Hope" on World Habitat Day 2006, we call upon all stakeholders, including citizens, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local and national authorities, to work together to ensure that cities are sustainable and inclusive.

As reported by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the health of populations is closely linked to the health of ecosystems. It is for this reason that integrating a concern for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the development policies and practices of cities has become an urgent necessity. While the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems are global issues, in practice, it is local actions that have the potential to address the situation.

In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, world leaders endorsed the target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and for the benefit of all life on Earth. The 188 Parties to the Convention agreed to accelerate their efforts at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.

Cities occupy 2 per cent of the planet's surface, but their residents use 75 per cent of the Earth's natural resources. Cities draw on their surrounding ecosystems for goods and services, while growing at the expense of nearby agricultural lands, wetlands and forests. This inevitably leads to the degradation of habitats and loss of biological diversity. Therefore, cities have a responsibility to protect and manage ecosystems and biodiversity in a sustainable manner.



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Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity can be very beneficial for cities and their inhabitants. Around one third of the world's largest cities obtain a significant percentage of their drinking water from protected areas. Appropriate ecosystem management can also be very cost-efficient, as shown by the studies indicating that the protection and rehabilitation of the water catchment area for New York City is up to seven times cheaper than building and operating a treatment plant to provide the same water filtration services as those provided by nature.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development underlined the need to approach biodiversity from a socio-economic perspective. We now know that the integration of biodiversity concerns into urban planning can ensure that urban centres grow in a sustainable way. With proper planning, cities can reduce consumption and the production of waste, and can provide incentives for investing in renewable energy. Urban planning can be used to avoid development on vulnerable lands, such as wetlands. Building regulations can promote technologies such as green roofs that can reduce energy costs and storm-water run-off. The creation of urban parks and green median strips can allow residents to enjoy beautiful surroundings that also provide habitat for wildlife.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirmed that biodiversity loss poses a significant barrier to meeting the needs of the World's poorest and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The consequences of biodiversity loss and ecosystem disruption are harshest for the poor, who have difficulty accessing or affording substitutes when ecosystems are degraded. Their health is threatened by poor sanitation, and they are often exposed to significant industrial pollution.

Ensuring rich and diverse biological resources can help ensure better livelihoods for the urban poor. Improving the state of ecosystems helps reduce pollution, and hence lower the threat of disease among urban populations, especially the poor. Urban agriculture, when meant for local markets, reduces the distance that the products have to travel in order to reach the consumer. Furthermore, the mass mobilization needed to tackle environmental issues in urban centres can lead to creative and inclusive initiatives. Some of the world's poorest cities have shown incredible self-reliance and successfully created mass mobilization to better the lives of all their citizens.

As land-use planners, policy makers, and developers and managers of local infrastructure, local authorities have a critical role to play in promoting sustainable development and its biodiversity components. As community leaders, they have a responsibility to raise public awareness about the importance of biodiversity. In addition, actions at the local level can have direct and obvious results that can convince others of the need to get involved, while sending a message to higher levels of government.

To encourage cities to contribute to the achievement of the 2010 target, a meeting on cities and biodiversity is being planned for March 2007 at the initiative of the Mayor of Curitiba. This meeting, the first of its kind in the history of the Convention, will provide a unique opportunity to engage local authorities in the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention and promote partnership between policy makers and local authorities for the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. The Curitiba outcomes will be submitted to the Ministers in charge of biodiversity at the next assembly of the Convention to be held in Germany in 2008.

The Secretariat of the Convention supports and encourages local authorities to participate in the implementation of the Convention. To this end, our new website will include a specific webpage for local authorities, which will provide information on what they can do to address one of the key challenges confronting humanity in this century.

Cities need to co-exist and grow in harmony with their surrounding ecosystems to ensure the well being of all concerned. Urban experiences with ecosystem conservation and biodiversity protection can also be useful at the national level, as they help to strengthen national policies and to develop global agendas that respond to urban needs. With the active participation of partners at all levels, future actions by cities to preserve ecosystems and biodiversity will constitute an essential part of global efforts to conserve life on Earth and to better the lives of its inhabitants.

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