



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



Message from the Executive Secretary

Ahmed Djoghlaf

To the participants of the

Conference of the Competence Network Urban Ecology

“Urban Biodiversity & Design – Implementing the

Convention on Biological Diversity in towns and cities”

Erfurt, Germany

21-24 May 2008

Distinguished Participants,

In Curitiba, Brazil, on March 28, 2007, 34 Mayors from around the world and other high-level officials pledged to “contribute actively to the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity” as well as “integrate biodiversity concerns into urban planning and development” in recognition of the need to “secure livelihoods for present and future generations in a sustainable way.” More than half of humanity today lives in towns and cities - by 2030, that figure will rise to two-thirds. As urban areas expand to accommodate this increase, they encroach on natural habitats and green spaces, contributing to environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. Consumption habits of urban citizens impact ecosystems and encourage land conversion to agricultural activities thousands of miles away. Although cities occupy only 2.8 per cent of the Earth’s surface, urban dwellers use 75 per cent of the planet’s natural resources. Cities control and influence issues with immediate impacts on biodiversity, such as urban planning, protected areas, transportation and urban infrastructure, watershed protection, sanitation, licensing of business operations, building codes and consumer awareness and education.

As such I am honoured to be a patron of this important international scientific conference on “Urban Biodiversity & Design – Implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in towns and cities.” This Conference will bring together an impressive array of specialists from almost 50 countries and a valuable list of 300 cases that will certainly contribute to the global knowledge level on cities and biodiversity. It will also summarise, for the first time in a global context, current scientific and practical approaches of implementing the CBD in urban areas. Such initiatives are crucial if we are to meet the 2010 biodiversity target set by 110 heads of State at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002: to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss.

Indeed it is fitting that this meeting should be held in Erfurt, Thuringia, a fertile area near the river Gera that fostered early development of agriculture and horticulture in the region,



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becoming the main source of wealth for the city. Erfurt is an example of urban biodiversity with more than 9000 small gardens and numerous parks and green areas that form greenbelts around the city. Moreover, the nearby UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Wartburg Castle and An der Ilm in Weimar demonstrate how biodiversity and man-made monuments can co-exist.

I would like to thank the Steering Committee of the CBD Cities and Biodiversity initiative (Curitiba, Montreal, Bonn and Nagoya), started two years ago to support the Curitiba Declaration, for continuously promoting the importance of urban biodiversity and contributing to the conference's proceedings here in Erfurt. Moreover, I congratulate all participants on your progress since the Curitiba meeting, in pursuit of our shared aim of promoting greater awareness of the important role of our towns and cities in contributing toward the 2010 target of halting the loss of biodiversity.

I look forward to continue working with CONTUREC, the Competence Network Urban Ecology, the international network for research and education on cities and biodiversity that supports this conference. I commit to assist in the distribution of your Conference Proceedings "Urban Biodiversity and Design", and to support your future conferences. And I will work with the cities here represented to ensure that the messages emerging from your exchanges in Erfurt will be heard in the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9) to the Convention on Biological Diversity happening in Bonn from May 19 to 30, 2008. Indeed, **COP 9 is expected to adopt a decision on cities and biodiversity whose draft was proposed by Brazil**, and we in the Secretariat look forward to implement this decision in collaboration with the participants of the Erfurt meeting.

I trust that this ancient city, whose wealth was founded on the diversity of living species, will encourage fruitful exchanges as you work to make all of our cities green, pleasant, and prosperous places.