



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



INTERNATIONAL
DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY
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**BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE**

MESSAGE

Message from

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on the occasion of

WORLD HABITAT DAY

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ONE NATURE • ONE WORLD • OUR FUTURE
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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: the human species is increasingly becoming an urban species. Two centuries ago, the urban population reached 3 per cent. Most of this evolution is occurring in developing countries, which host the largest part of the planet's biodiversity. The impact of cities on biodiversity is therefore becoming an increasing concern as urban environment consumes more natural resources.

This year's theme 'Harmonious Cities' is indeed very apt to today's reality as 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.

Urbanization has a variety of implications for urban biodiversity and ecosystems. Firstly, knowledge about and contact with nature diminishes as the number of rural dwellers decreases. Secondly, cities become managers and users of biodiversity as they depend on it for the provision of natural resources and ecosystem services. Thirdly, the urban poor, who are more vulnerable to the loss of biodiversity than the rich for services such as food, water, fuel and building materials, are both a cause for and a victim of the depletion of these resources. Fourthly, with unsustainable urban growth, ecosystems are affected and their services to cities are diminished.

However, factors influencing environmental change in urban landscapes often also originate far beyond city, regional or even national boundaries. Within the next ten years, population movements within and across continents will accelerate and exacerbate current pressures on land, ecosystems and natural resources. Long-term planning of urban landscapes requires an understanding of these global, regional and local forces and their integration into planning at an appropriate scale.

Cities and local authorities play a critical role in designing and implementing land-use and zoning planning tools, urban development and infrastructure guidelines, investment promotion, and consumer awareness campaigns, all of which have direct effects on biodiversity, and in particular on water, climate change, protected areas, agriculture and forests, marine and coastal biodiversity and communication, education, and public awareness.

An increasing number of urban leaders around the world have recognized that ecosystems and biodiversity provide them with social, economic, cultural and ecological benefits that are vital for their survival. Local authorities have mobilized to adopt practices to sustainably manage the ecosystems they depend on, and the biodiversity that constitutes one of their main assets.

The Convention on Biological Diversity requests its Parties to implement decisions regarding biodiversity at all levels, from international to national and subnational. Local authorities have already been recognized as critical stakeholders in the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development and through the Local Agenda 21. They are considered an essential partner for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. Aware of the critical mandate of local authorities and particularly cities, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been working with networks of cities, international organizations and other United Nations agencies to encourage Parties to support cities in addressing the 2010 biodiversity challenge, and to provide Governments at all levels with the tools and technology to allow cities to fully incorporate biodiversity issues into urban planning and development.

To this end, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have recognized the crucial role of cities and local authorities. At the initiative of the Mayor of Curitiba, the Declaration on cities and biodiversity was adopted in March 2007. In May 2008, the call for Local Action for Biodiversity, was initiated by the Mayor of Bonn, and was subsequently adopted and submitted to the High Level Segment of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to

the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9). As a result, the 5000 participants to the Bonn meeting adopted a decision on cities and local authorities. A plan of action will be submitted to COP-10 and a Nagoya city summit will also be convened.

The secretariat has put in place several initiatives including the Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity, which, in partnership with UN-Habitat and other partners including, UNEP and ICLEI – Local Governance for Sustainability, will be formally launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, on 7 October 2008, in Barcelona. The partnership is aimed at mobilizing a network of cities for the United Nations International Year on Biodiversity, in 2010, at the occasion of the next UN Summit, which will take place in Oct 2010, in Nagoya, Japan.

As the youth are the future of our planet, the Convention on Biological Diversity, in partnership with the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, also launched the *The Green Wave*, (www.greenwave.cbd.int) a global campaign aiming to educate children and youth on biodiversity and the need to reduce its loss and to enable young people to make a tangible contribution towards both biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. On September 21, the city of Curitiba fully joined the Green Wave campaign, by encouraging and supporting schools in raising awareness on biodiversity and environmental issues. Celebrating the Brazilian Tree Day, the city government of Curitiba launched its city-wide Green Wave by planting native trees throughout the entire Municipal schooling network.

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