



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



INTERNATIONAL
DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY
22 May 2008
**BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE**

STATEMENT

by

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

at the

**OPENING OF THE EXPERT WORKSHOP ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY BIODIVERSITY INDEX**

Singapore 10-12 February 2009

Please check against delivery



ONE NATURE • ONE WORLD • OUR FUTURE
COP 9 MOP 4 Bonn Germany 2008



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we all know, 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 can have positive impacts not only on human development and economies but also in some instances on biodiversity: one city of 10 million people with sound urban planning produces less impacts on biodiversity and the environment than 10 cities of 1 million habitants, even if well planned: larger cities are actually more efficient in terms of resource use than smaller cities.

However, in many cases, urbanization and lack of sound planning produce negative impacts on the environment and biodiversity.

The battle for life on earth will be won or lost in cities. To win this battle we need to win the heart and soul of the people. Prof. Tommy Koh Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Director of the Institute of Policy Studies and Chairman of the National Heritage Board in Singapore once said:

“In the final analysis, the goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved by Government, business, experts, international organizations and NGOs alone. We have to win the hearts and minds of the citizens of the world. We have to inculcate in every child a love of nature. We have to influence the daily habits and lifestyles of peoples all over the world. We should aim to persuade every consumer in every country to internalize the ethic of ‘reduce, re-use and recycle’.”

Local authorities have already been recognized as critical stakeholders in the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and through the Local Agenda 21. The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have already recognized the crucial role of cities and local authorities in achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. Indeed, the number of international meetings on the theme of cities and biodiversity held in 2008 alone is a testament of urban commitments to creating healthy urban environments that improve rather than degrade our planet.

Aware of the critical mandate of local authorities and particularly cities, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been acting as the coordinator of the recently launched Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity, a network of cities, international organizations and other United Nations agencies, to encourage Parties to support cities in addressing the 2010 biodiversity target to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, 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.

At the initiative of the Mayor of Curitiba, the Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity was adopted in March 2007. In May 2008, by adopting decision IX/28, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity specifically recognized the role of cities and local authorities in reaching the objectives of the Convention. Moreover, the call for local action for biodiversity initiated by the Mayor of Bonn was subsequently adopted and submitted to the high-level segment of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. On the same occasion, Minister Mah Bow Tan of Singapore offered to jointly facilitate the creation of an urban biodiversity index that will allow cities to measure their progress in conservation of biodiversity.

I would therefore like to reiterate my gratitude to Minister Mah Bow Tan and to Mr Ng Lang, Board, Chief Executive Officer of the National Parks Board—and his dedicated team, for hosting the first Expert Workshop on the Development of the City Biodiversity Index (CBI) and at the same time sharing

Singapore's unique experience of the Garden City with you, representatives of the international community.

Indeed, the "Garden City" in Singapore is an inspiration to all of us who strive to achieve the goal of sustainable development. Also, the Singapore Green Plan 2012 represents a road map for achieving sustainable development, addressing emerging environmental challenges and protecting the environment and the well being of the people.

Singapore has been a trail-blazer, not only in practice on the ground in its own city, but also on the international stage, raising awareness about the valuable contribution of urban biodiversity to local, regional, and indeed global well-being of all species. There could be no better place than Singapore to gather high-level scientists and decision makers from around the world to develop an urban biodiversity index. This tool will become a reference and key in evaluating and measuring progress made by cities towards conserving biodiversity. Considering that urban dwellers use 75 per cent of the planet's natural resources, steps taken by cities to improve their environmental performance are concrete steps towards achieving the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In practice, by assisting national Governments and local authorities in benchmarking biodiversity conservation efforts in the urban context and by fully integrating the indicators developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the CBI will help cities to better communicate to national Governments any commitments and activities that will contribute to reaching the objectives of the Convention. The efforts and synergies of the cities involved in testing the CBI will make this tool a valuable stepping-stone on the road to the achievement of the 2010 target. It will create an incentive for cities to cooperate in implementing the Convention and interacting with their national Governments, in line with their respective national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). Moreover, the CBI and the activities of the Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity will lead to the development of a post-2010 action plan for the cities -to be presented at the Cities and Biodiversity Forum, to be held in Nagoya during the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in October 2010.

Ensuring the future of biodiversity and achieving the objectives of the Convention requires the engagement of all States and all citizens of the world. While biodiversity issues have a global impact, their roots are local. Thus, it is inevitable that national Governments and non-governmental organizations rely more and more on the contribution of local governments. In so many cases, conservation activities require the full participation and cooperation of local authorities and populations to even let them come into being, let alone ensure success. A IUCN survey of 220 relevant governments, non-governmental organizations, academia and other categories revealed that 47 per cent already engage local authorities in their biodiversity projects, and 75 per cent say their future projects will include local authorities.

As the saying goes, we cannot manage what we cannot measure. If not managed adequately, the growth of the urban population may accelerate the unprecedented loss of biodiversity of our planet. However, the loss of biodiversity is not inevitable, and the unsound urban management is not the unavoidable destiny of cities. Sound urbanization and environmentally well-managed cities can exist.

I encourage you all to participate actively in and contribute to all the discussions in the workshop to make a difference, because what cities achieve has a direct bearing on what the Convention on Biological Diversity can achieve, and ultimately on the well being of all life on Earth.

Thank you for your kind attention.