

MAYORS CONFERENCE LOCAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY

Parallel event to the Conference of the Parties to the UN-CBD
Bonn, Germany, 26-28 May 2008



Cities and Biodiversity

Bonn Call for Action

Local governments offer true partnership for biodiversity

Local governments stand for the well-being and the will of half of the world's population. They offer their experience and their influence to strengthen and promote implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity within a global and multilevel partnership.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth, upon which the well-being of humankind is dependent.

Local governments are key actors in conserving and managing biodiversity – both locally within their own administrations and globally, as resource consumption within urban areas affects ecosystems around the world.

Mayors and key decision-makers from local governments around the globe convene on the occasion of the 9th Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity from 26-28 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany. They demonstrate their commitment towards cooperation and action and, at the same time, request a multilevel partnership to improve biodiversity globally.

The local level of government, closest to citizens and the economy, plays a key role in the successful implementation of international framework conventions. Cities and towns have a fundamental role in the implementation of the UNCBD Convention. They therefore appeal for substantial support in their endeavours and for policy framework conditions which enable them to fully unfold the local potential for protecting global biodiversity. In addition, they offer to work with national governments and the international community as reliable partners for implementation, communication and outreach.

Local governments are key actors

Local governments and their networks are key and accountable actors in biodiversity management both locally and globally.

Worldwide, no agency is in a better position to manage urban biodiversity and educate citizens about its importance than local government.

The role of local government in biodiversity management is crucial, because:

- ♦ more than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas;
- ♦ urban inhabitants and economies consume 75% of the resources utilised by humankind;
- ♦ a major part of worldwide incomes is generated in urban areas,
- ♦ local governments are experienced in implementation, planning, decision making and awareness-raising; and
- ♦ they have long-established structures for networking, experience exchange, cooperation and partnership.



Local Action for Biodiversity reflects the mandate and responsibilities of local governments to act within their own jurisdiction as well as beyond. Their populations depend on natural resources from within and outside their boundaries.

- ♦ **Locally:** Biodiversity enhances ecosystem services. Local governments depend on functioning ecosystems to provide municipal services, e.g. healthy catchments for water supply and purification. They are also responsible for conserving and improving the biodiversity in their own territory.
- ♦ **Globally:** Local governments act to raise the awareness of their citizens and of business, which can influence behaviour at the level of individuals and decision-makers. This is critical as patterns of resource consumption in urban areas affect ecosystems all around the world. Local governments also foster exchange of experience and thus offer great potential in partnerships for biodiversity.

Urban biodiversity under threat

Urban biodiversity embodies the dependency of mankind on natural resources, and is much more than the presence of animals and plants in our cities. Urban biodiversity is threatened to the same extent as biodiversity and ecosystems globally. However, urban areas have increasing potential for the development and growth of biodiversity.

The reasons for the growing pressure on species and their habitats in urban areas are manifold: sealing of land; uncontrolled urban sprawl – often caused through economic pressure in spatial planning; loss and degradation of habitats; climate change; pollution; exploitation of species and many more. Growing urbanisation will further increase the pressures on biodiversity.

The fatal link between poverty, limited access to natural resources and the loss of biodiversity is clearly visible in urban areas; and the loss of biodiversity has immediate impacts on poverty and social exclusion and the well-being of citizens.

Biodiversity and ecosystems provide the basis for urban life

The conservation of biodiversity not only has environmental benefits, but also brings a variety of economic and social benefits to cities. Urban technology of the future shall follow the principle of harmony between man and nature - integrating development and biodiversity.

Biodiversity contributes directly towards sustainable development in many ways. Examples are:

- ♦ provision of sources of food, fuel, medicine;
- ♦ ecosystem services like water and air purification, maintaining healthy soils, control of pollutants, carbon sequestration, climate regulation, reduced vulnerability to impacts of disasters, recovery from unpredictable events and mitigation of natural disasters, and pest control;
- ♦ citizens' well-being and enhancement of quality of life;
- ♦ cultural and aesthetic value to citizens;
- ♦ opportunities for tourism and recreational activities;
- ♦ resources for education, research and monitoring; and
- ♦ opportunities for income generation.

Local governments unfold their potential

Local governments accept their responsibilities and use their great potential for conserving and managing biodiversity. In doing so, we are already investing considerable parts of our budgets in biodiversity management and in the development and implementation of urban biodiversity strategies.

Many examples presented in Bonn demonstrate that cities, counties and regions:

- ♦ develop and implement long-term local biodiversity strategies;
- ♦ integrate biodiversity in all aspects of local planning, such as land-use planning including compensation mechanisms, mobility planning, economic development planning, as well as conservation planning;

- ♦ manage natural areas and green spaces, restore and rehabilitate degraded natural areas and control invasive species;
- ♦ value biodiversity for assisting with the provision of municipal services, e.g. fresh and waste water treatment, energy and housing, and support urban agriculture as a contribution to food security;
- ♦ purchase eco-certified and fair-trade goods and services, e.g. certified timber; and
- ♦ value biodiversity as a contribution to social development, poverty alleviation and job creation

Local governments raise awareness and involve stakeholders

Local governments are mandated by their citizens. To a growing extent they use this position to influence their awareness and behaviour.

Therefore local governments can:

- ♦ raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity in all sectors of society, often with a special focus on youth;
- ♦ educate their citizens;
- ♦ engage citizens and other stakeholders in participatory decision-making;
- ♦ develop and strengthen capacities within and outside the administration;
- ♦ interact with organisations and business in order to draw on their potential for conserving and managing biodiversity;
- ♦ include biodiversity in city partnerships and cooperation projects; and
- ♦ demonstrate their accountability by reporting back to the public.

Local governments cooperate globally

Mayors and key local decision-makers from around the globe commit themselves to cooperate on local strategies for the protection of biodiversity.

Local governments are increasingly partnering at a global scale to work together towards sustaining biodiversity. For example, they:

- ♦ have already initiated global cooperation through the Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity in 2007;
- ♦ show their collective commitment by signing Countdown 2010;
- ♦ have initiated global projects, such as “Local Action for Biodiversity”;
- ♦ aim to develop tried and tested instruments and indicators related to biodiversity management;
- ♦ take part in research projects; and
- ♦ cooperate in other projects which illustrate the potential of local action.

Leading local governments and networks like ICLEI and the World Mayors Council on Climate Change wish to extend this global cooperation to many more cities and towns and invite their colleagues to join.

Local governments need enabling framework conditions

Local governments are offering to strengthen their commitment, their influence, their action and their cooperation towards global biodiversity initiatives management. They call upon all other levels of government, such as states, national governments and supra-national actors to provide enabling framework conditions. This means prioritising major biodiversity goals, tasks and resources.

To unfold the full potential of local governments to contribute locally and globally to the conservation and management of biodiversity, common understanding is needed of what are the priorities, major biodiversity goals, tasks and resources to successfully achieve the 2010 target. Therefore, local leaders call on their partners on all other governmental levels to consult local governments upstream on discussions that can affect biodiversity, as well as to recognise and endorse local contributions to global strategies.

As the Mayors Conference is held in parallel to the High Level Segment of the COP of the UN CBD, local leaders will use this opportunity to have their voices heard in the international community by networking with key representatives from national governments and UN representatives. A statement of mayors on behalf of local governments at the High Level Segment will summarise the local positions.

The value of partnerships: Cities & Biodiversity Initiative

Local leaders express their explicit interest in partnership and cooperation. While offering their contribution, they also request the international community to support global cooperation by local governments with appropriate projects.

Cities and Biodiversity is a global initiative of UN agencies, local governments and other partners to strengthen the capacity of cities, towns, counties and interested regional governments for improving management and conservation of biodiversity through technical cooperation, capacity building projects, communication, and joint advocacy.

Host cities of UN CBD COP support international cooperation

Local governments hosting a UN CBD event are called upon to express their commitment by inviting other local governments.

Mayors and other key decision-makers from local governments express their gratitude to those cities who have hosted events in the past and especially to the Mayor of Bonn for hosting the Mayors Conference on “Local Action for Biodiversity” in May 2008. The host cities for the next UN CBD Conferences of the Parties (COPs) are asked to follow this excellent example. Local leaders wish to convene again soon to evaluate existing partnerships and showcase achievements.

Organisers of the Mayors Conference on “Local Action for Biodiversity”

City of Bonn (www.bonn.de)

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (www.iclei.org)

Service Agency Communities in One World/InWEnt

Capacity Building International (www.service-eine-welt.de, www.inwent.org)

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