

18 May 2020

Alar Soever
Mayor
Town of The Blue Mountains, ON
Canada

Dear Alar Soever

The International Day for Biodiversity will be celebrated on the 22nd of May and World Environment Day on the 5th of June, 2020. This, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic provides a sobering opportunity to reflect on our relationship with nature.

Nature provides us with essential life-supporting services such as food, clean water, medication and habitats. Healthy and diverse ecosystems contribute to making cities more resilient and better able to cope with extreme events and other impacts related to climate change. Countless studies have also demonstrated that interacting with nature positively impacts our mental and physical health and well-being, helping to alleviate stress and anxiety, especially prevalent at this time.

As mayors and leaders of local and subnational governments, we have a unique opportunity and an important responsibility to protect our biodiversity and ecosystems in ways that will restore humanity's relationship with nature. Together, we can have a global impact.

Cities and regions are critical to addressing biodiversity loss and reconnecting people with nature

According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), biodiversity continues to decline in every region of the world, significantly reducing nature's capacity to contribute to people's well-being. This alarming trend endangers economies, livelihoods, food security, human health and quality of life of people everywhere.

It is well documented that cities, large and small, are ideally placed to significantly contribute to curbing biodiversity loss and reversing the unsustainable use of nature by proactively bringing nature back into our rapidly urbanizing world. By planning our cities *with* nature – through nature-based solutions, green infrastructure and green open spaces – we can dramatically improve the quality of life for all.

Join me in committing to take action

We have a special opportunity to act in the coming year. First, as we develop our post-COVID-19 recovery plans. Second, as we prepare for the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). On that occasion, the world is expected to adopt a new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. We need to ensure that cities and regions are written into this new global agreement and demonstrate the full potential and impact of cities acting together for nature.

ICLEI, as designated focal point of the Global Task Force (GTF) of Local and Regional Governments for Biodiversity, is bringing together, with key partners, all relevant networks and associations to call for a dedicated, stepped-up Decision and renewed Plan of Action for local and subnational biodiversity action. The contents of this call in the attached document (Annex 1) should be taken up in a dedicated Decision and should also be mainstreamed into the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

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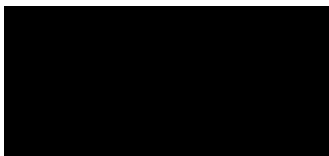
To make a significant impact, we need to mobilize without delay

I encourage you to:

- **Take action** in your city or region to address biodiversity challenges and integrate nature-based solutions in your development approach, including as you prepare your post-COVID recovery plans.
- **Join** the global *CitiesWithNature* initiative, which offers a unique platform for all cities to share ambitions, projects and actions and to learn from and inspire each other towards further action. Joining *CitiesWithNature* is free and easy, and by doing so, you will also be contributing to our goal of making this the world's largest collective commitment by our urban community to act *for and with* nature for the benefit of people and our planet.
- **Liaise with** the National Focal Points of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in your country, to make them aware of your track record and engagement on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and on your perspectives for the Post-2020 framework. **Call on** them to support a dedicated new Decision on local and subnational action for biodiversity.
- **Work with** me and others to empower your community and raise awareness about the value of biodiversity and nature's contribution to human health and well-being. **Celebrate** special days to raise awareness, such as International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22) and World Environment Day (June 5).
- **Participate and follow** the outcomes of key events and make your voice heard. Follow [@CitiesWNature](#) and [@ICLEICBC](#) on Twitter for information about key events and their outcomes.
- **Mobilize in the lead-up to COP 15**, including the planned 7th Global Summit of Local and Subnational Governments.

Ultimately, we need to halt and reverse the trends of biodiversity loss and take the path of *Living in Harmony with Nature*. Together, let's take strong action to create vibrant cities, where people and biodiversity can thrive.

I thank you in advance for your support and, most importantly, your decisive action, and I wish you all strength and wisdom in dealing with the considerable challenges that lie ahead.



Valérie Plante

Mayor of Montréal

ICLEI Global Ambassador for Local Biodiversity

Useful links:

biodiversity@iclei.org

[CitiesWithNature](#)

[National Focal Points of the CBD](#)

[International Day for Biological Diversity](#)

[World Environment Day](#)





ANNEX 1

CALL FROM SUBNATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR A STEPPED-UP DEDICATED DECISION AND RENEWED PLAN OF ACTION TOWARDS THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Draft subject to further consultation, 15 May 2020

1. Introduction

1.) This document provides an overview of what has been achieved at the global, national and subnational levels since 2008 in strengthening the role and contributions by the subnational and local levels of government towards the achievement of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It focuses specifically on reviewing the successes, achievements and gaps of Decision X/22 of the CBD adopted at Conference of Parties (COP) 10, on the Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (the PoA). The current PoA concludes this year and the review makes a strong case, based on the successes and lessons from the past decade, for renewing the PoA with a stepped up and more ambitious plan, under the new global biodiversity framework.

2.) Nature is declining at an alarming rate, and we've seen that the current global response is insufficient. The difficulty to mainstream biodiversity into all sectors and across all levels of government, is one of the main obstacles to the implementation of the current CBD Strategic Plan. While this Plan was intended to be more focused on the Parties to the CBD - the countries - the next global biodiversity framework is intended to be inclusive and participatory, actively engaging all stakeholders and all levels of governments. Cities are engines of innovative solutions, while subnational governments can ensure both vertical and horizontal integration of biodiversity policies. Local and subnational governments can take direct action to restore ecosystems and reverse extinction trends, while tackling a wide range of sustainable development issues.

3.) Urgent action is needed at all levels of government and with all other actors to halt the current trajectory of biodiversity loss and achieve the transformative action called for by scientists, governments and other stakeholders. A renewed and significantly stepped-up PoA will institutionalize the need for collaboration between all levels of government, to ensure we are capable of realizing the level of ambition we foresee in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GFB).

2. The current Plan of Action 2011 to 2020

4.) Decision X/22 and its 10-year (2011-2020) "[Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity](#)" was the first-ever long-term Decision by a Rio Convention to recognize and support the role of subnational and local governments as key implementing partners to the Parties. It provided guidelines outlining how national governments could assist local and subnational governments in implementing the CBD, preparing action plans and ultimately assist their national governments in achieving the goals of the Convention. More recently, the 14th meeting of the Parties adopted an unprecedented number of decisions -seven in total- that relate to further involvement of all levels of government. The call for a comprehensive and participatory process to prepare the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework also recognized the critical importance of local and subnational governments and it is time to manifest this approach beyond 2020.

5.) The response to the process of recognizing subnational and local governments includes the implementation and strengthening of initiatives, projects, programs. Further evidence lies in the advocacy work done by networks, consultative bodies and alliances, such as the [Group of Leading Subnational Governments to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#) (GoLS) led by the Governor of Aichi, that gather global leaders, from local and subnational governments, willing to rise to the challenge of halting biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. Among the networks that have taken on the advocacy work are [ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability Cities Biodiversity Center](#) (CBD) and [Regions4 Sustainable Development](#), both organizations head the Advisory Committees, resulting from Decision X/22, on Cities and Subnational Governments, respectively, and actively contribute to the dialogue with the Parties to the Convention and its Secretariat on behalf of local and subnational leaders. Furthermore, the [European Committee of the Regions](#) is a consultative body of both local and subnational governments leading the discussions at a European level. The robust examples of what has been achieved are testimony that both constituencies and its platforms are ready to play a stronger involvement in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, provided that it allows for the manifestation of their potential as fundamental partners of the Parties in its implementation.

3. Main components of a new dedicated and stepped-up decision that builds on a renewed Plan of Action toward 2030

6.) Now more than ever, the whole of government must take decisive action, individually and collectively, to bring about the transformative change needed to bend the curve in biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. To fully support Parties in the development, adoption as a policy instrument, and implementation of an effective, participatory and bold new global biodiversity framework, local and subnational governments are calling for:

- (i) the inclusion, as appropriate, of subnational and local government in 2030 and 2050 goals and 2030 action targets;
- (ii) resource mobilization for increased investment in biodiversity action at subnational and local levels;
- (iii) mainstreaming of biodiversity at subnational and local levels;
- (iv) capacity-building for subnational and local governments;
- (v) tailoring CEPA initiatives and instruments to the subnational and local contexts (communicating, educating and raising public awareness);
- (vi) monitoring, evaluation and feedback by subnational and local governments; and
- (vii) support for networks and alliances to accelerate biodiversity action by subnational and local governments.

For each, the following sections present supportive elements and principles for the Parties' consideration.

a) Inclusion, as appropriate, of subnational and local governments in 2030 and 2050 goals and 2030 action targets

7.) Subnational and local governments are part and parcel of Government and accountable to national governments to varying degrees. They are essential partners in supporting the implementation of the CBD, yet they are an underused ally and resource for achieving global biodiversity goals. They are currently undertaking meaningful action on both direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and seeking to work with nature to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to contribute to

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and National Determined Contributions (NDCs). Local action and management at ecosystem and landscape levels lead to greater efficiency, effectiveness and equity. The post-2020 global biodiversity framework must create enabling conditions in which the subnational and local governments' role is recognized and their contribution valued and optimized if it is to achieve transformative outcomes at the global scale. It is therefore necessary to formally recognize the role of subnational and local governments in the 2030 and 2050 outcome-oriented goals and action-oriented targets. To this end, they should, whenever realistic and feasible, include a clear reference to active participation by subnational and local governments. To meet such targets and goals, subnational and local governments are not only important implementers of action plans and strategies developed at national level, but also critical innovators in developing solutions on the ground, at the subnational and local level. They work not only through their mandated authority but also through extensive voluntary contributions, creating important partnerships that mobilize the business sector, civil society organisations, IPLC, youth and women. Making the most of what subnational and local governments have to offer will mean recognising the full range of the roles that they can play. It would, therefore, be necessary to include, as appropriate, local and/or subnational contributions into designing, committing to and implementing NBSAPs and other implementation support mechanisms. To promote multilevel governance, UN organizations and associated global actors should invite representatives of the subnational and local government constituency to serve formally and participate fully in institutional structures and instruments where appropriate. This will ensure that subnational and local positions and contributions are fully realized and enabled, as has happened in the case of the CBD's Informal Advisory Group on the Mainstreaming of Biodiversity and Advisory Committee on Programme of Work for the Global Initiative for Communication, Education and Public Awareness.

b) Resource mobilization for increased investment in biodiversity action at subnational and local levels

8.) Subnational and local governments face numerous obstacles in accessing the existing international and regional resource opportunities, and in attracting public and private financing for biodiversity. It is, therefore, necessary to address such obstacles and barriers in the post-2020 biodiversity policy framework by creating enabling conditions for greater investments in biodiversity action by subnational and local governments. Meanwhile, subnational and local governments should be able to reprioritize their own resources - i.e. within their budget - as well as to mobilize new resources from the private sector. It is imperative that no global crisis is addressed at the cost of leaving nature behind: Now more than ever, nature-based solutions must be part of the solution to global crises. It is vital the contribution by subnational and local governments in addressing these crises, is well understood and adequately resourced, and investment into nature-based solutions increased.

c) Mainstreaming of biodiversity at subnational and local level

9.) To make further progress in mainstreaming biodiversity - under the Long-Term Approach to Mainstreaming (LTAM) recommended by the Informal Advisory Group on Mainstreaming - it is imperative to reinforce the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity across the whole of government, and its policies, including land-use planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies, fiscal policies, budgets and accounts. Secondly, to identify the efforts that subnational and local governments specifically need to undertake, together with the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities, and other major groups and stakeholders to support biodiversity mainstreaming across jurisdictional, cross-cutting and sectoral policies. Thirdly, to ensure an enabling environment that supports the mainstreaming of the multiple social, economic and health benefits of nature at the

subnational and local levels, to improve the quality of life and resilience of communities; enhance social cohesion; lead to financial benefits and savings for both individuals and governments; and promote sustainable consumption and production, within planetary boundaries, for urban lifestyles.

d) Capacity building for subnational and local governments

10.) Subnational and local governments should be equipped with adequate human, financial and technical means, commensurate to their responsibility and jurisdictions, so that actions taken at the subnational and local levels can contribute effectively to the implementation of NBSAPs. Specific consideration should also be given to strengthening subnational and local governments' capacity to implementing nature-based solutions (NBS) and green and blue infrastructure; and to take actions that improve the quality of life and resilience of their communities, by adopting systemic and ecosystem approaches to challenges that communities face daily such as shelter, food, water, energy, pollution, transport, health care, decent employment opportunities and enhancement of livelihood options. These are all interlinked and fundamentally connected in nature. It is therefore necessary to identify and recognize these needs resulting in a more efficient biodiversity action.

e) Subnational and local government-tailored CEPA (communicating, educating and raising public awareness) and local action

11.) The implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be supported by a coherent, comprehensive and innovative communication strategy. Building on lessons learnt from the implementation of the Strategy Plan 2011-2020, subnational and local governments should explicitly be part of the post-2020 communication strategy. They are better placed to raise public awareness on the need for immediate biodiversity action, as well as take action across the whole of society, as they are the closest public authority to citizens and are also the best informed of the specific context they operate in. Their direct connection to communities and circumstances provides them with unique insight and legitimacy when communicating necessary changes in lifestyle and production patterns, while reconnecting nature and people in and around our cities and regions. In the forthcoming Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, with around 75% of our planets' resources being used in and around cities, and urban populations set to rise to almost 70% by 2050, subnational and local governments' will inevitably play an important role in restoring vital ecosystems that provide food and energy, water and biodiversity to support life.

f) Monitoring, evaluation and feedback by subnational and local governments

12.) To assess the implementation of measures included in the NBSAPs, each country needs to collect data from the subnational and local levels. It is therefore necessary that Parties support subnational and local governments to improve decision-making through better access to biodiversity data; and develop a monitoring system that facilitates data collection by subnational and local governments that will then be aggregated at national level for reporting and evaluation. Monitoring would benefit from integrating input by subnational and local governments into setting targets in NBSAPs, and other frameworks such as National Determined Contributions (NDCs), Sendai risk frameworks, UN Habitat's City Prosperity Initiative Framework, and health and well-being indices. In the post-Covid world, integration and measurement across biodiversity, climate, sustainability, economic, health and well-being agendas will be increasingly necessary. This in turn would help provide feedback on progress towards attaining biodiversity goals and targets, including on the actions taken, their effectiveness, and resulting changes in biological, social and economic conditions that contribute to the attainment of SDGs and implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The CitiesWithNature and RegionsWithNature platform

provides an online mechanism, which is endorsed by the CBD Secretariat, where subnational and local governments can make their commitments and set targets as the basis for enabling ongoing monitoring and reporting that can feed into national monitoring and reporting systems.

g) Support for networks and alliances to accelerate biodiversity action by SNGs

13.) Parties should facilitate the international cooperation among subnational and local governments, as well as their membership in alliances or networks with nearby authorities or with authorities under the same national legislation as a measure to address lack of economic and financial resource – realizing e.g. economies of scale with expertise-pooling or pool implementation of NBSs; to address knowledge gaps or the need for capacity-building. To this end, it is necessary to address the digital gap to allow increased connectivity and use of online platforms to make it easier for subnational and local governments to work together also online. Recognition should also be given to the value of peer-to-peer exchanges and the pioneering work that ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, the European Committee of Regions, Regions4 Sustainable Development and the Group of Leading Subnational Governments to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets have played supporting and strengthening subnational and local governments.

4. Concluding remarks

This document is the product of ongoing engagement and collaborative effort between ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainable Development and its Cities Biodiversity Center (CBC), the European Committee of Regions (CoR), the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments and Biodiversity (coordinated by Regions4 Sustainable Development and the Government of Quebec), and the Group of Leading Subnational Governments toward Aichi Biodiversity Targets (GoLS). It was prepared as input into the [Edinburgh Process for Subnational Governments, Cities and Local Authorities on the development of the Post 2020 GBF](#). The Edinburgh Process will be delivered through online consultations taking place over May and June 2020. The online consultations will be supported by a series of online information sessions (5 – 8 May 2020) and thematic webinars (dates tbc). The Edinburgh Process is part of the work programme of the Convention on Biological Diversity Open-Ended Working Group for the development of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as a partner event. The process will virtually bring together delegates from across the globe and is being hosted by the Government of Scotland. ICLEI is one of the co-organizers of this consultation process. The process aims to consult the local and subnational government constituency on the Zero Draft Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), recommendations for a renewed and stepped-up dedicated Decision and Plan of Action on local and subnational governments, and the Edinburgh Declaration, as joint outputs from the Edinburgh Process that will feed into the CBD consultation processes.