

18 May 2020

Greetings

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.

.../2



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](https://twitter.com/CitiesWNature) and [@ICLEICBC](https://twitter.com/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](#)

