



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE SECOND CURITIBA MEETING ON CITIES AND
BIODIVERSITY**

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Life in harmony, into the future
いのちの共生を、未来へ
COP 10 / MOP 5

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To mark the first anniversary of the high-level segment of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Prefecto Richa decided in March 2007 to invite here, in this very place, 34 mayors or their representatives with a view of engaging cities in the battle for life on Earth. The Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity was adopted and submitted to the 6,000 participants representing the 193 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity attending the Bonn Biodiversity Summit in May 2008. The mayors announced that biodiversity was at the core of the quality of life of their citizens, that they had an important role in preserving biodiversity, and that they were ready to assist their national Governments in implementing the Convention.

I remember quite vividly the passion of Mayor Richa as he emphatically called for “the active engagement of local authorities”. And I remember an equal passion in the voices other participants, including Mayor Gerald Tremblay of Montreal and Mayor Matsubara of Nagoya. The initiative on cities and biodiversity was born here in Curitiba, in the same birthplace as that of the enhanced phase of implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In 2008, at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Bonn, the letter and spirit of the Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity were reiterated through the Mayors’ Conference and through the participation of the four mayors of the steering committee at the high-level segment of the meeting. The Parties responded clearly, and, for the first time, an environmental multilateral environmental agreement recognized the importance of local authorities. The Conference of the Parties adopted decision IX/28, which encourages Parties to integrate practices by cities and local authorities into the implementation of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

Now, at the start of the International Year of Biodiversity, less than 10 months away from the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in Nagoya, Japan, and the Nagoya Cities Summit, mayors from around the world are once again taking the floor to say that they want more: they are proposing to work with the Parties to the Convention, United Nations agencies, and their own networks and associations to put in place a coherent plan for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention and to optimize international cooperation on urban biodiversity issues.

It is exciting to learn, from the letter sent by Deputy Minister of Environment, Izabella Teixeira, to nine Parties advising them about this meeting, that Brazil will once again take the lead—as it did in 2008 for decision IX/28—in submitting to the Conference of the Parties a draft plan of action on biodiversity in the urban context. It is exciting to learn that this plan is being developed in close cooperation with local authorities, their associations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). . By adopting this consultative approach, the Global Partnership will ensure that the plan will unfold through dynamic cooperation, facilitating concrete commitments and, ultimately, on-the-ground actions.

The Convention on Biological Diversity owes a lot to Brazil, to Curitiba, and to Mayor Richa in particular. This country saw the birth of the Convention in 1992, this city hosted the eighth meeting of the Parties in 2006, and it was through the initiative of Mayor Richa, in 2007, that the first meeting on cities and biodiversity took place at this very same venue.

Let me therefore pay tribute to you, Prefecto Richa, and your team for your outstanding leadership and unique contribution in promoting the initiative on cities and biodiversity. It is a pleasure to work with such an inspiring leader. I look forward to continuing a productive working relationship and a valuable personal friendship with Mayor Richa in the future.

I would also like to acknowledge the strategic vision of Minister Mah Bow Tan, Minister of National Development of Singapore, who at the same high-level segment, right after the four mayors of the steering committee, announced his country's initiative to create a city biodiversity index. The Convention Secretariat and the National Parks Board of Singapore then jointly organized the first Expert Workshop on the Development of the City Biodiversity Index, which was held in Singapore in February last year. With the participation of seventeen technical experts on biodiversity indicators as well as city executives responsible for urban biodiversity projects, much progress was made at the meeting. We can all look forward to the presentation of the finalized Singapore Index at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya.

I would also like to pay tribute to other members of the steering committee and, in particular, Mayor Gerald Tremblay of Montreal for his continued support. I would also like to acknowledge the participation of Jean Lemire and convey to him my gratitude for his outstanding contribution for promoting *The Green Wave* initiative and for his next biodiversity-related expedition to be launched on 29 October 2010 at the closure of tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. May I also convey to Mayor of Nagoya and to the Aichi-Nagoya promotion committee our deep gratitude for the convening of the Cities and Biodiversity Summit in Nagoya on 25-26 October 2010 just prior to the high-level segment of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and for their unique contribution in seconding to the Secretariat for a period of two years a staff member from the city to prepare for this historic summit.

I would like also to convey my gratitude to our partners and in particular ICLEI and its programme on local action for biodiversity (LAB), with its 21 pioneering cities. I had the pleasure of attending their 2009 World Congress in Edmonton, Canada, where a motion was adopted for the Local Action for Biodiversity Initiative to be turned into a global ICLEI initiative, meaning that it will be expanded beyond the 21-city project. This is truly a welcome development, as it will enable other cities to fight biodiversity loss by drawing on the wealth of experience that the original 21 LAB cities have thus far gained.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Christine Alfsen, recently appointed as the head of the UNESCO New York office, for contributing the useful concept of urban biospheres and the Urban Biosphere Network (URBIS) network to this initiative, a clear example of the Convention's ecosystem approach applied in the urban context.

The plan of action on cities and biodiversity with its associated Singapore urban biodiversity index will be a major tool for the implementation of the post-2010 biodiversity strategy to be adopted at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Nagoya meeting is expected to see the adoption of a new Strategic Plan for the Convention for the period 2011-2020, including a 2050 biodiversity vision and the identification of means of implementation. The international protocol on access and benefit-sharing, also expected to be adopted in Nagoya, will be a major instrument for the implementation of the 2020 targets and 2050 biodiversity vision.

The Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity has demonstrated that urbanization can in fact help to lessen environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, if it is done correctly,

if it is led by such visionaries as are gathered here today under the leadership of a city that has demonstrated that cities are part of the solution to meet biodiversity challenges. You are turning our worst fears about urbanization on their head. “Out of the sighs of one generation are kneaded the hopes of the next,” wrote the Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis. I commend you all for turning cities, so recently thought of only as sprawling concrete jungles, into true leaders in the struggle to stop biodiversity loss.

As I often say, the fight to save biodiversity will be won, or lost, at local level. I therefore look forward to continuing to work with you in the lead-up to tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the Nagoya Cities Summit. “Biodiversity is life, biodiversity is OUR life”, as the slogan of the International Year reminds us, a message we must do our best to spread.

Thank you for your kind attention.