

**Message by  
Elizabeth Maruma Mrema  
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
on the occasion of the World Habitat Day 2022  
3 October 2022**

On this 3 October 2022, we recognize the Global Observance of World Habitat Day and the start of Urban October.

This year's theme, "Mind the Gap. Leave No One and No Place Behind", focusses on the state of human settlements all over the world and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. Finding and acting on the driving factors of growing inequality, poverty, and other challenges in human settlements must be a priority.

Inequality and biodiversity loss are interlocking challenges. The poor and vulnerable depend heavily on biodiversity for their survival and well-being. Biodiversity doesn't just provide food and other necessary goods, it also provides ecosystem services such as the maintenance of air, clean water, and the breakdown of waste – all things that are critical when addressing shelter and development. Biodiversity also functions as an accessible supermarket, pharmacy and gathering place for many communities.

Unsustainable urban development is a tremendous threat to biodiversity. When we provide adequate shelter and provision of services to all city dwellers across the world, we must find solutions that, not only prevent further damage to biodiversity, but also help reverse the effects and create a sustainable future for all.

The right to adequate shelter and the right to a healthy environment are non-negotiable. They are my right, your right and every person's right. Mind the gap. Leave no one and no place behind.

As we prepare for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15) in Montreal this December, we must all embrace this mindset.

The adoption and implementation of a transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework at COP 15 is more important than ever, including for urban development. The draft framework is a comprehensive plan for transformative change in how we value biodiversity and how we protect our planet for all future generations. It includes specific targets to provide the benefits of green and blue spaces to urban dwellers, build sustainable cities and food systems, halt and reverse biodiversity loss, reinforce climate action, strengthen public planning and redirect financial flows to support these necessary objectives. It will take a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to make it happen, so let us work together to affect real change.