

**Statement by
Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
World Cities Day 2022
31 October 2022
Act Local to Go Global**

.....

This 31 October 2022, we recognize World Cities Day under the theme of “Act Local to Go Global”. This message could not be more timely for the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Simply put, cities everywhere need to respond to the biodiversity extinction crisis. Growing awareness of urban sustainability is encouraging as we are seeing cities around the world greening their urban fabric, to help halt and reverse biodiversity loss. The Berlin Pact (currently being designed), [the CitiesWithNature platform](#), and [the Edinburgh Declaration](#) all support the Plan of Action to be adopted in support of the Convention. However, so much more is needed. Biodiversity cannot just be a consideration; it must be a priority. Cities need to be planning and preparing urban areas for a green, sustainable future, while also being the first responders to crises and emergencies with nature in the forefront of their minds.

Humankind is in crisis. There are clear and present emergencies on climate, health, economics, and yes, biodiversity. Cities are uniquely positioned to be the laboratory for human diversity and innovation, two concepts that are critical when facing the challenges these crises present. I am encouraged to welcome the 7th Summit of Cities and Subnational Governments as an official parallel event to the fifteenth meeting of the Convention of Parties (COP 15) in Montreal this December.

As we prepare for COP 15, I have high expectations. This COP is under the presidency of China, who not only has one of the largest immediate populations transitioning from rural to urban in the next ten years but is also offering exciting solutions for biodiversity. From sponge cities that are designed so rainwater is kept and absorbed through sustainable urban drainage systems, to the restoration of rivers through a consortium of municipalities, and even a pilot Green City in the province of Zhejiang/HuZhou.

The focus of COP 15 will be the adoption and implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and it is more important than ever. The draft framework is a comprehensive plan for transformative change in how we value nature, how we use our natural resources and how we protect our planet for generations. It includes ambitious, but achievable, targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, reinforce climate action, build sustainable cities and food systems, strengthen public planning, and redirect financial flow to support it all. To achieve these goals and targets, we need to see action in cities, citizens and governments around the world. For if we do not act locally, we will not see change globally.