

**8th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG OWG-8) – 3-7 February 2014**

Biodiversity

Speaker From the Floor

at the Morning Hearings of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders

on behalf of Local Authorities Major Group

Delivered by Shela Patrickson, Manager, Cities Biodiversity Center,

ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, LAMG OP

Mr. Co-Chair,

It gives me a great pleasure to address the member states of the United Nations on behalf of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, which is a global network of local governments for sustainability with more than 1000 members that compasses more than 12 mega-cities, 100 super-cities and urban regions, 450 large cities as well as 450 medium-sized cities and towns in more than 80 countries.

Biodiverse City Programme and network is one of the 8 Urban Agendas of ICLEI's approach to local sustainability. We actively support Global Biodiversity Information Facility, Global Partnership on Local and Subnational Action for Biodiversity, URBIS-Urban BiodiverCity Initiative, the Cities Biodiversity Outlook and Index. ICLEI is also a leading member of the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments for Post2015 Development Agenda Towards HABITATIII.

As almost every speaker here has noted, biodiversity underpins the very survival of the world's population, and the majority of that population lives in cities. The number of urban dwellers is projected to almost double again by 2050, which means that urban infrastructure needs to be developed to cater for this growth over the next 35 years, as has been established over the last 4000 years. This vast and rapid urbanization is going to impact all we currently do or have done until now in all spheres of policy, governance and implementation. And if 1 out of 2 will live cities in Urban World of 2030, UrbanSDG is not an option, but a must to reach global goals. This is why ICLEI and other partners have advocated for a stand-alone UrbanSDG.

Much of this urbanisation will take place in biodiversity hotspots, and biodiversity therefore needs to be a fundamentally integrated part of this development. Many delegates have urged this integrated approach over the last 2 days, and we would support this as essential.

Cities also consume a proportionally large percentage of the world's natural resources, with impacts on biodiversity, both within and without the city boundaries. This means that there needs to be cross-boundary partnerships between local, subnational and national governments, as well as the linkages between urban and rural areas, to address biodiversity loss and sustainable consumption.

Not only that, but cities often contain rich amounts of biodiversity, as the recently published City Biodiversity Outlook outlines. This is a comprehensive and science-based assessment of the links between urbanisation, biodiversity and ES, and makes it clear that urban biodiversity is significant at a global scale, in terms of species, habitats and ES.

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In fact, urban biodiversity provides essential ES, and as Mr Dias said yesterday, green urban areas have been shown to reduce violence, increase health and productivity, and improve quality of life of citizens. Not only socially, but economically, urban biodiversity contributes essentially “free” ecosystem services which support service delivery, water & food security, contributes to livelihoods and poverty alleviation, regulates temperature, reduces the impacts of climate change, and increases resilience against disasters, such as droughts and floods. Urban biodiversity is well-documented to provide important habitat for pollinators, connectivity for movement of fauna and flora across urban areas.

In conclusion, both biodiversity and cities, as well as biodiversity in cities, cannot be ignored if a comprehensive and meaningful set of SDGs is to be developed.

An urban SDG should therefore include biodiversity as a fundamental component due to cities reliance on biodiversity, the significant impact that they have, and the rich levels of biodiversity contained in urban areas. Not only should there be a stand alone Biodiversity SDG and Urban SDG, but biodiversity should also be integrated into many of the other SDGs as a core and cross-cutting theme.