

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

Biodiversity

Intervention 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.

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.

Yesterday the importance of cities was mentioned by Mr Dias, the Executive Secretary of the CBD, and a question was raised from the floor about this point. As the World Bank, and other speakers, have mentioned rural areas, my stress of the importance of urban areas is not to say that rural areas are not important, but that the issues and challenges are different.

So why are cities and urban biodiversity important for this discussion around the SDGs? Firstly, cities rely on biodiversity at a fundamental level, as does the rest of the world's population, and have a disproportionate impact on biodiversity both within and without city boundaries. Cities also have the significant potential to be part of the solution, and are where much of the implementation of national goals and policies will take place.

But perhaps it is more important to note that urban areas often contain very rich amounts of biodiversity, contributing significantly to global biodiversity. Many essential ES are provided by urban biodiversity for urban citizens. As Mr Dias pointed out, the social value of green areas has been shown to contribute to reduction of violence, increase of health and productivity, and improve quality of life.

Other ES provided by urban biodiversity include reduction of the impacts of climate change; resilience against disasters like flooding and droughts; assisting in storm water management, regulation of temperature; improving food and water security; contributing to livelihoods and addressing poverty. Urban biodiversity also provides habitats for species, such as pollinators, and connectivity for the movement of both fauna and flora.

Much progress has been made recently to recognise that cities are important implementers of the Strategic Plan of the CBD, and important partners alongside nations (i.e. COP Decisions IX/28, X/22, and XI/8, and especially the "Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity" in 2010). The

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upcoming CBD COP12 in Korea, will see another opportunity to strengthen this movement through the side event, the *Biodiversity Summit: Local and Subnational Governments for Sustainable Development*.

Last month, at OWG7, we have happily observed a broad and strong consensus from Member States and all Major Groups that sustainable urban development should be positioned at the core of post2015 development agenda.

Inspired with this important recognition, and considering both the fundamental reliance of cities on biodiversity, and the significant impact that cities have on biodiversity, ICLEI strongly advocates that biodiversity should be a core component of the Urban SDG, but also embedded in many of the other SDGs as a cross-cutting theme.

Thank you very much.