



## The Erfurt Declaration - **Urbio** 2008

This declaration was submitted during the International Conference of the **CO**mpetence **NeT**work **UR**ban **EC**ology (CONTUREC) “Urban biodiversity and design – Implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in towns & cities” 21. - 24. May 2008, Erfurt, Germany

### 1. Preamble

The increasing urban population, climate change and loss of biodiversity are all strongly connected. With two-thirds of a considerably larger world population predicted to be living in urban areas by 2050, the “Battle for life on Earth” will be lost or won in urban regions.

The role of urbanisation in the loss and degradation of global biodiversity was acknowledged in the local Agenda 21 processes and in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992 and has been discussed in the subsequent eight Conferences of the Parties. Whilst cities pose major challenges for protecting biodiversity, the opportunities they offer have, so far, been understated.

A major step toward recognizing the potential of cities for biodiversity was made in Curitiba (Brazil) in March 2007, when a global partnership in “Cities and Biodiversity” was initiated by 34 mayors and numerous high level officials from cities across all continents in order to engage local authorities to protect and sustain their unique contribution to global biodiversity. From the 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> May 2008 in Erfurt (Germany) 400 scientists, planners and other practitioners from around 50 countries summarized for the first time in a global context the current scientific and practical approaches of implementing the CBD in urban areas. This declaration reflects the views of the participants at the “Urbio 2008” conference that urban biodiversity is a vital part of achieving the aims of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

### 2. The importance of urban biodiversity

Urban biodiversity is the variety and richness of life including genetic, species and habitat diversity found in and around towns and cities.

During our “Urbio 2008” conference we discussed the current state of knowledge and practice in “urban biodiversity”. The contributions at the conference demonstrated clearly the range of different approaches necessary to understand the importance and function of urban biodiversity and to bring these into local practice. The approaches are:

- Investigation and evaluation of biodiversity in urban areas
- Cultural aspects of urban biodiversity
- Social aspects of urban biodiversity
- Urban biodiversity and climate change
- Design and future of urban biodiversity

Towns and cities are both important experimental areas and fields of experience in the interrelationship between humans and nature.

The case for urban biodiversity in relation to the aims of the CBD is compelling:

- Urban ecosystems have their own distinctive characteristics.
- Urban areas are centres of evolution and adaptation.
- Urban areas are complex hotspots and melting pots for regional biodiversity.
- Urban biodiversity can contribute significantly to the quality of life in an increasingly urban global society.
- Urban biodiversity is the only biodiversity that many people directly experience.

Experiencing urban biodiversity will be the key to halt the loss of global biodiversity, because people are more likely to take action for biodiversity if they have direct contact with nature.



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### 3. Challenges for the future

Halting the global loss of biodiversity and ensuring all our cities are green, pleasant and prosperous places requires:

- Raising greater public awareness of biodiversity in urban areas
- Fostering interdisciplinary long-term research into urban biodiversity for a better understanding of the interactions between humans, urban biodiversity and global biodiversity
- Linking research on climate change and urban biodiversity
- Intensifying dialogues and establish a bridging mechanism between researchers, planners, policy makers and citizens to improve the integration of research findings into urban design
- Fostering education in urban biodiversity and design

Initiating new programs of activities concerning “Cities and Biodiversity” within the CBD would provide the mechanism needed to tackle these challenges.

To address these issues requires the following tasks and responsibilities:

- Scientific associations, networks and working groups should support international research networks on the importance of biodiversity in the urban context and its influence at regional and global scales.
- National and international institutions should support research and its translation into best practice for urban biodiversity and design.
- National governments and agencies for nature conservation should establish coordinating mechanisms. These should obtain, coordinate and monitor local and regional information concerning biodiversity and urbanization.
- Local authorities should link urban biodiversity with sustainable urban design.

As a community of urban biodiversity professionals we will especially support further CBD initiatives on “Cities and Biodiversity” through:

- sharing our knowledge and commitment through this conference and in the future,
- establishing a global “Urbio” network for education and research into urban biodiversity,
- promoting urban biodiversity through continuing dialogue with the CBD especially, linking future urban biodiversity network – “Urbio” – meetings with future COP meetings.

### **On behalf of the**

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