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COP25 GPSC Session

Integrating biodiversity, climate and land management. Examples from the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC)

Concept in Brief

This session will focus on the synergies of integrating biodiversity, climate change and land management into urban planning in cities. During the session, climate, biodiversity and land management experts will present the latest feedback on the role of local and subnational governments emerging from ongoing and recently concluded negotiations. An update on the latest development of the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) will be followed by a conversation focusing on the urgency in adopting an integrated approach to urban sustainable planning, and how this could be approached looking at protecting biodiversity and adopting conscious land management policies with strong relevance to delivering Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as well as National Adaptation Plans. Experiences, lessons learned, new and emerging opportunities will be shared to help city representatives and key stakeholders to move forward towards integrated urban approaches.

Background

In this era of rapid urbanization, the development trajectory of cities has a profound influence on the global and local environment, with the natural environment to play a crucial role in shaping the livability of cities. Cities and urban communities contribute up to 70 percent of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions globally, with an accelerated transition needed away from fossil fuels to sustainable, clean energy sources. This transition requires protecting, restoring, enhancing and mainstreaming biodiversity and other natural assets in and around our cities, which will have direct and direly needed biodiversity benefits, enhance resilience and enable climate change mitigation. Some examples of nature-based solutions (NBS) that will be featured in the session include healthy functioning wetlands for flood attenuation to urban green zones and large parks that can act as effective carbon sinks and generate bio-energy while addressing heat island effects and bringing a myriad of social, health and wellbeing benefits to urban communities, reconnecting them with nature.

The direct and indirect effects of climate change have severe negative impacts on biodiversity that ultimately underpins all life on our planet. By considering land use management, urban planning, climate change and urban natural assets, such as biodiversity, water, and healthy ecosystems from a

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holistic perspective, locally contextualized, yet collective and coordinated actions, enabled through initiatives such as the fast-growing CitiesWithNature platform (www.citieswithnature.org), can result

in a powerful wave of change the world needs now to locally address the dual crisis of climate and biodiversity, with a wide range of very tangible and immediate benefits to cities and their citizens.

Moreover, the new report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)¹ finds that global goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories. The Aichi targets are likely not going to be met and those set for beyond 2020 may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological sectors. Yet, science tells us that it is not too late, while emphasizing the need for more urgency and immediate action through transformative change: a fundamental, system-wide reorganization of systems as we know it across political, technological, economic and social sectors. Considering the seven main topics that have been chosen by the Chilean Presidency, i.e. electro mobility, renewable energies, circular economy, ecosystems and forests, biodiversity, oceans and Antarctica, this GPSC session has been shaped to focus on the connections between biodiversity, ecosystems and forests as solutions to face climate change. Too often, local governments prioritize siloed sectoral approaches, when there are integrated planning solutions that would allow them to maximize positive social, environmental, economic and security impacts.

Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) is a partnership and knowledge platform that promotes integrated solutions and cutting-edge support for cities seeking to improve their urban sustainability. ICLEI, together with WRI and C40 are GPSC's Resource Team, providing capacity building, sharing and training opportunities to participating cities. By situating city-level implementation projects in a broad sustainability framework, ICLEI, as a member of the GPSC Resource Team, offers a holistic approach to urban development.

Session brief

During the Working Group Meeting "Green Urban Development: Biodiversity, Natural Capital Accounting and Nature-Based Solutions for Cities"² held on 08-10 May, 2019 in Washington DC, the GEF, together with the World Bank and the Resource Team, committed to foster the integration of biodiversity and nature-based solutions (NBS) agenda into the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities and to facilitate an understanding on how biodiversity can be protected, enhanced and mainstreamed in cities, enabling cities to develop in harmony with nature, in line with the United Nations 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

The Convention on Biological Diversity's COP15 will be convened in Kunming in October 2020, with the theme "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth". COP15 will be

¹ Approved at the 7th session of the IPBES Plenary (29 April – 4 May 2019) in Paris (<https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>)

² <https://www.thegpsc.org/events/gpsc-working-group-meeting-green-urban-development-%E2%80%93-biodiversity-natural-capital-accounting>

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preceded by the UN Nature Summit in September at the UN Headquarters in New York City and followed by the 2020 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) expected to be held in Glasgow, UK where Parties are expected to present their second, and hopefully more ambitious and inclusive, NDCs and to adopt a holistic and ambitious approach in order to build a common future for all. In this context, ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center is working on the “Ten-Point Framework for Subnational

Biodiversity Action” as essential component of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, with a focus on:

- Multi-level governance, mainstreaming and localizing biodiversity in other global agendas such as climate change and the SDGs;
- An inclusive action-oriented engagement mechanism;
- Increased resource mobilization;
- Support for the CitiesWithNature commitment and reporting platform;
- A strong, dedicated COP Decision on local and subnational governments.

Finally, land management decisions need to not only be part of the discussion but also to be the connector between climate change and biodiversity. Change in land use and urban sprawl have been identified as the main causes of land degradation leading to environmental damages, loss of biodiversity, air pollution and resulting in serious climate change impacts. Local governments need to step up, look at their own reality and create local policies that generate concrete results. It is clear that without autonomy and decentralization local action will be limited.

Objectives and key messages

This GPSC session aims to provide an improved understanding about:

- Holistic approaches in addressing climate action, urban development, ecosystem services and nature-based solutions;
- How to map cross-cutting benefits between Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans and post2020 global biodiversity framework;
- The importance of integrated planning to become the new business as usual to enable systemic change;
- Experiences in the multilevel implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- Synergies between UN Climate Action Summit 2019 with Nature Based Solutions Track and Infrastructure, Cities and Local Action Track, UN Nature Summit in September 2020, UN Biodiversity COP15 in Kungming in October 2020 and the UN Climate Change COP26 in Glasgow in December 2020 with a specific view in raising ambitions and addressing emergencies on nature and climate.

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Agenda

(60-minutes session)

Date and Time: 07 December 2019, 10:30 - 11:30

Venue: NDC Partnership Pavilion

Master of Ceremony: **Maryke van Staden**, Manager, Low Emission Development Program, Director of ICLEI's carbonn Center, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability (3 min)

Welcome remarks: **Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba**, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the 2019 Climate Action Summit (3 min)

Keynote presentations (20 min)

- **Aloke Barnwal**, Senior Climate Change Specialist, Global Environmental Facility (GEF) (5 min)
- **Louise Baker**, Chief of the External Relations and Policy Unit of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) (5 min)
- **Valerie Hickey**, Practice Manager for the World Bank's Practice Group on Environment and Natural Resources, World Bank (5 min)
- **Kobie Brand**, Global Director, ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center (5 min)

Panel (15 min)

Moderator: Frances Seymour, Distinguished Senior Fellow, World Resource Institute

- **BAI Wenjie**, Director, Division of Regulations and Standards, Municipal Ecological Environment Bureau, City of Beijing, China (5 min)
- **Simone Raskob**, Deputy Mayor, City of Essen, Germany (5 min)
- **Márcio Rojas da Cruz**, General Climate Coordinator, Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovation and Communication, Brazil (5 min)

Open discussion and wrap up (15 min)

- Open space for discussion with panelists
- Conclusions and closing remarks

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Related Resources:

- Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) <https://www.thegpsc.org/>
- Media Release: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’: <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>
- [The five ICLEI pathways](#)
- Opening Statement by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability & the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments for Biodiversity: <https://cbc.iclei.org/opening-statement-by-iclei-local-governments-for-sustainability-the-advisory-committee-of-subnational-governments-for-biodiversity/>
- GPSC Working Group Meeting: Green Urban Development – Biodiversity, Natural Capital Accounting and Nature-Based Solutions for Cities: <https://www.thegpsc.org/events/gpsc-working-group-meeting-green-urban-development-%E2%80%93-biodiversity-natural-capital-accounting>
- Solutions Gateway online resource platform: <http://www.solutions-gateway.org/>
- Transformative Actions Program (TAP): <http://tap-potential.org/>
- Urban Transitions Alliance (UTA): <http://www.urbantransitions.org/>
- Urban-LEDS II project: <https://urban-leds.org/>

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