

# The future of nature is urban

## *First Meeting of the Mayors Forum of the Urban Nature Program and Plan of Actions*

**Urban ecosystems provide the foundation for urban livability, productivity, and climate action.** Investing in nature provides solutions to many of the challenges cities are facing, including sustainable urban food systems, decent jobs, clean air, thermal comfort, and conservation of freshwater sources, all while reducing risks from extreme weather events in cities.

**Unfortunately, unsustainable urban expansion and land use change threaten the opportunity for cities to harbor rich biodiversity<sup>1</sup>, altering ecology and climate.** Without integrating nature into development, this urban expansion threatens almost 1 in 5 existing protected areas by 2050, endangering one million species, accelerating climate change, and undermining human flourishing.

**How cities accommodate urban growth and manage limited resources while protecting and strengthening biodiversity will have a significant impact on global sustainability.** For the first time, the role of cities in conserving biodiversity is explicitly recognized in an international agreement. Target 12 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) calls for Enhancing Green Spaces and Urban Planning for Human Well-Being and Biodiversity. Across all urban contexts and geographies, cities are securing their sustainability, competitiveness, and long-term health by planning and investing in nature to enhance biodiversity and climate resilience.

In this context, the Urban Nature program, co-led by the World Bank, UNEP, and ICLEI, was launched at the 28th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP28) in December 2023. The Program will scale up financing to support cities and sub-national governments in implementing nature-positive development, and integrated solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss. To achieve this objective, the Program will collaborate and coordinate with various initiatives, including High Level Champion on Nature.

Cities and sub-national governments participating in this first meeting of the Mayors Forum of the Urban Nature Program recognize the importance of actions that:

- **Integrate nature into all aspects of urban planning.** Especially, land use planning must integrate and leverage nature to maximize its benefits for public health, climate adaptation, and a city's long-term sustainability and livability. In this context, incorporating biodiversity data into spatial planning and strategy is critical to supporting science-based targets and progress reporting<sup>5</sup> to guide urban development.
- **Build green and blue infrastructure to enhance ecological connectivity** by linking nature across a city and beyond. An ecosystem approach will allow biodiversity to thrive while helping cities manage stormwater and flooding, mitigate urban heat, and reduce air pollution.
- **Avoid investments that damage urban nature.** Finance flows directly harming nature were 30 times greater than investments in nature-based solutions during 2022, increasing the need for cities to guide public and private investment toward integrating green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to protect cities from climate change impacts.

**This Mayors Forum has highlighted how cities, investors and partners are strengthening nature in cities:**

- Multilateral development banks and financial institutions are scaling up financial support for green and blue urban infrastructure, including leveraging innovative financial products to encourage private sector investment.
- Partner organizations are sharing and expanding knowledge on how cities are leveraging nature and biodiversity to solve many of the world's most pressing challenges, including strengthening local governments' capacity for ecological planning and policy development.

Going forward, the Urban Nature Program intends to undertake the following actions leading to Climate CoP30 in Belem and the second meeting of the Mayors Forum in 2026:

- Supporting cities in designing and preparing for green-blue-brown urban infrastructure that enhances biodiversity, resilience, and livability.
- In collaboration with other initiatives, supporting cities to raise ambition and commitment in implementing Target 12 of the GBF.
- Providing targeted deep dive training to cities on urban nature.
- Sharing good practices, especially those from the Lighthouse Cities; and
- Building the evidence base for how investment into integrating nature and biodiversity into cities underpins the sustainability, competitiveness, and long-term health of our planet.

*Partnership of Urban Nature Program*

