

103 Reinforcing and developing urban and peri-urban forests in line with the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions

RECALLING that, according to the United Nations (UN) in 2050, the world's urban population is expected to be close to 6.7 billion, compared with 4.2 billion today;

CONSIDERING the desire expressed by local authorities in 2023 at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai and at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Montreal, to confirm the value of urban forestry as a Nature-based Solution (NbS) for the benefit of city dwellers (cooling islands, protection of water and air resources, reduction of soil sealing, well-being, etc.);

RECALLING the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's 2017 definition of an urban forest: "networks or systems comprising all woodlands, groups of trees, and individual trees located in urban and peri-urban areas; they include, therefore, forests, street trees, trees in parks and gardens, and trees in derelict corners";

CONSIDERING that some metropolises and cities are involved in ambitious tree planting programmes such as the Tree Cities of the World or the Cities4Forests network, and global and regional platforms such as the World Forum on Urban Forests (Mantua 2019, Washington 2023) convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which have generated valuable guidance for cities in various socio-economic contexts;

NOTING that many urban or peri-urban forests are remnants of ancient woodland that have become anthropised, degraded and fragmented, and urgently need to be restored and preserved, and that urban forest projects are being developed with a focus on conserving the natural heritage, through the deconstruction of urban development elements or the strengthening of existing wooded areas;

RECOGNISING that challenges related to urban and peri-urban forests vary considerably between the North and the South, and that in many cities in the South, informal urban expansion, weak land tenure and limited local government capacity create structural barriers to green infrastructure planning and implementation;

ALARMED also at the pressures on these forests, which are harmful to biodiversity, as a result of ultra-dense, concrete-covered cities that generate a very strong need for nearby nature; and

EMPHASISING the fact that cities account for 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions, amplifying climate hazards from which they suffer severe consequences, and that the construction of cities focused solely on human economic needs has pushed nature out of cities despite the needs of city dwellers;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. CALLS on States and local authorities to:

- a. recognise a special status for urban and peri-urban forests;
- b. increase the planting of diverse, resilient and high-quality native woody species in order to create a functional wooded infrastructure based on ecological continuity;
- c. ban clear-cutting in peri-urban forests, where possible, and encourage sustainable forest management;
- d. build a network of experience feedbacks to be relayed in global urban forums; and
- e. develop and implement a global monitoring, statistical tracking and reporting mechanism to assess changes in these forests, such as the percentage of forests under urban/peri-urban influence, in line with indicators 12.1 and 12.b of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

2. CALLS ON researchers to study urban forests and trees in cities, due to their greater exposure to changes in temperature, carbon dioxide and monoxide deposits, nitrogen and ozone, and pathogen attacks, with response curves that are several decades ahead of their time;

3. CALLS on local authorities, urban planners, owners, and managers to:

a. favour the mixing of local species, the conservation of existing trees and wooded areas because of their genetic diversity;

b. revitalise towns and city centres in consultation with residents, and restore existing woods and forests by applying ecosystem-based approaches such as the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions; and

c. recognise the role of private landowners in urban forest conservation and explore mechanisms such as payments for ecosystem services (PES) to encourage the long-term protection and stewardship of these forests;

4. CALLS on nurseries and organisations that grow plants from seed to cultivate local native species from diverse and well-adapted genetic sources; and

5. CALLS on the relevant IUCN Commissions to collaborate in the production of interdisciplinary tools and guidance documents that support governance, legal protection, citizen engagement and the ecological restoration or protection of urban forests, to coordinate more closely with FAO and other urban forestry networks, and to consider criteria for classifying protected areas and applying the Red List of Ecosystems criteria adapted to these forests, which are essential for biodiversity and quality of life in cities.