

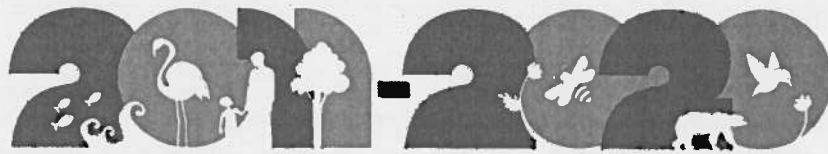


ECOSOC • Integration Segment (27–29 May, 2014)
SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

**BUILDING
THE FUTURE**
we WANT

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

**Contribution to the
2014 United Nations Economic and
Social Council (ECOSOC)
Integration Segment**



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

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17 April 2014

Dear Mr. Drobnjak,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the ECOSOC Integration Segment on sustainable urbanization, from the point of view of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The extraordinary and increasing rate of urbanization, especially in the developing world, is clearly illustrated in your documentation and in other recent information on this topic. Many of the accompanying challenges and opportunities have also been well documented and explicitly stated for example at UN-Habitat's World Urban Forum, the seventh session of which I recently attended. However, the impact of urbanization on *ecosystems and the biodiversity that underpins them* is seldom made explicit. Cities drive biodiversity loss through disproportionate consumption and production patterns: they are responsible for 75 per cent of the world's resource utilization; while as few as 600 cities produce 60 per cent of the world's GDP. This consumption and production impacts and relies to a large extent on ecosystems far beyond the borders of these cities, reaching every forest from which timber is sourced; every ocean from which fish are harvested; every landscape from which coal is mined.

At the same time, biodiversity is critical to making urbanization sustainable. Besides the goods upon which we rely from nature, ecosystems offer a variety of support structures that are essential to cities: reduction of healthcare costs; mediating the urban heat island effect; facilitating storm water infiltration to decrease the impact of flooding and to recharge groundwater; protection of slope settlements from landslides; the supply of drinking quality water; and a host of other documented examples.

Thus, the omission of biodiversity from the sustainable urbanization discussion needs urgently to be corrected. Perhaps because they are typically provided free of charge, nature's goods and services seldom enter cities' accounting systems. Yet this natural capital upon which we rely continues to be eroded by, among other factors, unplanned and rapid urbanization. Furthermore, it affects the poor first and foremost. The way that we urbanize in the future offers opportunities to harness biodiversity and ecosystem services rather than exploit them. We, therefore, implore policy-makers and those influencing policy to consider biodiversity and ecosystem services as a core component of sustainable urbanization. This outcome can be expedited by affecting the following policy interventions, at the appropriate levels of government:

- (a) Integration of biodiversity values into development and poverty reduction strategies;
- (b) Removal of incentives that result in the erosion of ecosystem services, such as incentives for urban sprawl;
- (c) Protection of especially vulnerable species and habitats when selecting areas for urban development;

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- (d) Restoration of ecosystems to offset land transformation from urban development;
- (e) Setting aside of accessible natural areas in cities, which are connected to one another and to the surrounding landscapes, to ensure ecological resilience;
- (f) Consideration of key biodiversity in city planning processes; and
- (g) Use of ecological infrastructure (such as wetlands to purify water; parks to moderate storm water flow) in urban planning.

At the Rio +20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, governments reaffirmed the key role of the CBD' Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020. The primary mechanism through which the Strategic Plan is transferred to the national level is through national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). The Integration Segment can play a key role in ensuring that NBSAPs are integrated across sectors of government, and are noted by those sectors with greatest influence on urbanization.

I extend to you the expertise of my staff to assist in follow-up to the Integration Segment, and I wish you the best in the important discussions to take place next month.

Yours sincerely,


Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias
Executive Secretary