

## **Item: 17**

**Policy and Resources Committee: 20 April 2021.**

**Edinburgh Declaration.**

**Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To considering signing the Edinburgh Declaration on biodiversity.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note:

#### **2.1.**

That the Edinburgh Declaration, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is intended to set out the aspirations and commitments of the Scottish Government, Edinburgh Process Partners and the wider subnational constituency of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, in delivering for nature over the coming decade.

#### **2.2.**

That, in recognition of the key role that subnational governments and local authorities play in delivering biodiversity protection, the Edinburgh Declaration is open for signing by parties working at the local level.

#### **2.3.**

That there are no immediate financial or legal implications associated with signing the Edinburgh Declaration.

**It is recommended:**

#### **2.4.**

That the Council sign the Edinburgh Declaration.

### **3. Background**

#### **3.1.**

In conjunction with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Scottish Government is leading the 'Edinburgh Process' of consultation with sub-national governments on their role in relation to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and targets, which will be agreed at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Kunming, China, during October 2021. Online

information sessions, thematic webinars and consultations have enabled the development of key outputs, including the Edinburgh Declaration.

### **3.2.**

The Edinburgh Declaration has been drafted by the Scottish Government on behalf of regional and local authorities and their representative organisations, active at international level. It is a primary means for local governments to be formally represented in the international process and to show political support for global action on biodiversity conservation. The Edinburgh Declaration will be presented at COP15, bringing visibility to its signatories and the wider subnational constituency.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1.**

The Edinburgh Declaration, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is a statement calling on national governments, as parties to the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, to adopt an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, with bold actions to halt biodiversity loss. It also calls for greater prominence to be given to action at the local level and recognises the role of all levels of government and society in working more effectively together over the next decade. The participation of subnational governments, cities, and local authorities from across the world is being sought in signing the Edinburgh Declaration.

### **4.2.**

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on all public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions. This is known as the Biodiversity Duty. The Edinburgh Declaration contains a commitment, which is already delivered by Scottish local authorities under the Biodiversity Duty. Signatories agree in principle to:

- Build on previous efforts, recognising the value of nature.
- Implement appropriate actions that build on global goals.
- Mainstream these actions, integrating them into local planning, management, and governance.

### **4.3.**

The commitment also includes other activities such as strengthening capacity building to deliver nature-based solutions, for example to the effects of climate change, through both green (vegetation and soil-based) and blue (water-based) infrastructure.

#### **4.4.**

Elements of the Edinburgh Declaration are likely to be reflected in the next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, and associated Delivery Plan. The current Biodiversity Strategy: 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity was completed at the end of 2020; however, due to the delay in setting new international targets and the impact of the pandemic, the new Strategy is unlikely to be published until spring 2022.

#### **4.5.**

In contributing to biodiversity targets, the Council acknowledges its duty to protect and enhance biodiversity in several ways, including the following:

- The range of work done by the Council across its services in fulfilling its Biodiversity Duty is collated on a three-year cycle in a summary report which is reported to the Policy and Resources Committee prior to its submission to the Scottish Government. The latest Biodiversity Duty Report was agreed at the General Meeting of the Council, held on 8 December 2020.
- The Climate Change Declaration Report 2019-2020, also agreed at the General Meeting of the Council, held on 8 December 2020, recognises the key role protecting and restoring biodiversity and the natural environment has in reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change.
- Orkney Islands Council is a partner in the Orkney Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group. The current version of the Orkney Local Biodiversity Action Plan covers the period 2018 to 2022. When the next version is prepared, its actions will seek to contribute towards the targets set out in the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

#### **4.6.**

The Scottish Government considers the Declaration as a tool to highlight to state parties the level of ambition and activity already present at a local level, and make the case for increased involvement of subnational, regional and local actors in relation to their national counterparts. Aberdeenshire Council became the first Scottish Council to sign the Declaration in November 2020, soon to be followed by several city authorities.

### **5. Links to Council Plan**

#### **5.1.**

The proposal in this report supports and contributes to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority theme of Quality of Life.

#### **5.2.**

The proposal in this report relates to the priority, "To protect Orkney's landscape and wildlife heritage" of the Council Delivery Plan.

## 6. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposal in this report supports and contributes to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Strong Communities.

## 7. Financial Implications

There are not anticipated to be any immediate financial implications arising from the signing of the declaration; there is however an implied expenditure commitment contained in the declaration which cannot be quantified:

“We, subnational governments, cities and local authorities, stand ready to meet the challenge of delivering, alongside Parties, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, **to ensure investment**, and play a stronger role in the implementation of the framework through a renewed and significantly stepped-up Plan of Action for subnational governments, cities and local authorities for the coming decade.”.

## 8. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations contained in this report.

## 9. Contact Officers

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## 10. Appendix

Appendix 1: The Edinburgh Declaration.

## EDINBURGH DECLARATION

### For subnational governments, cities and local authorities on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

31 August 2020

#### Preamble

We, subnational governments, cities and local authorities - as participants and contributors to the *Edinburgh Process for Subnational and Local Governments on the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework*, and supported by the Secretariat and some Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity - are **deeply concerned** about the significant implications that the loss of biodiversity and climate change has on our livelihood and communities. The impacts on our environment, infrastructure, economy, health and wellbeing, and our enjoyment of nature are already visible. Indeed, the COVID-19 global pandemic has reminded us how important it is to live in harmony with nature. Healthy biodiversity and the ecosystem services that it provides are key for human well-being and to build the resilience of our cities and regions, both during and after the pandemic, and it should be central to our recovery.

We **are concerned** that, as outlined in the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, none of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets have been fully met; that action by CBD Parties alone is insufficient to put us on a path to the 2050 vision of 'living in harmony with nature' or to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and that convergence across multilateral environment agreements (MEA's) is progressing at too slow a pace.

We **acknowledge** that the IPBES *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* concludes that, despite insufficient action, it is not too late for the climate or for biodiversity, but that transformative action is needed at all levels.

We **recognise** the need for transformative change across terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and across urban development and all productive sectors to ensure enhanced food security, human health and sustainable livelihoods whilst avoiding, mitigating or minimising the negative impact on biodiversity. We also **recognise** the role that many indigenous peoples and local communities have in the management of their territories, through effective biodiversity mainstreaming across all sectors.

We **note** the need to develop effective policy, governance and financing solutions at all levels of government and to ensure vertical integration across national, subnational, city and local levels to effect transformative change. These should address both the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, and integrate all dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic, cultural and social).

We **also note** the vital role that indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth, non-governmental organisations, and wider society, play in decision making and in taking action at

subnational, city and local levels, and that there should be a fully collaborative approach to ensure active participation of these groups.

We **highlight** the key role of the private sector, including the financial sector, and **encourage** them to catalyse the transformative change needed through full, active and responsible engagement, in support of biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable use.

We **emphasise** the key role that subnational governments, cities and local authorities already play in protecting and enhancing biodiversity and in delivering actions across planning, implementation, and monitoring.

We **welcome** the endorsement of the *Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities, and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020)* under Decision X/22 and **recognise** the productive role that this has played in the last decade mobilising subnational, city and local authority actions towards implementing the goals of the Convention; and in fostering an increased recognition on the critical role of our constituency in the CBD.

We **celebrate** the commitments and statements already issued by subnational governments, cities and local authorities including recent declarations of intent<sup>12</sup>, and in particular the results achieved through the outputs of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Global Biodiversity Summit of Cities and Subnational Governments – the *Quintana Roo Communique on Mainstreaming Local and Subnational Biodiversity* (2016) and the *Sharm El-Sheikh Communique for Local and Subnational Action for Nature and People* (2018).

We **acknowledge** the need to build upon the existing *Plan of Action* under Decision X/22, and the advocacy agenda of subnational governments, cities and local authorities over the past decade, and **collectively commit** to raising our ambition and action in the coming decade.

### **Development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework**

We **welcome** the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, in particular clear, action based, SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) targets and the inclusion of an integrated monitoring framework.

We **thank** the Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework for taking an inclusive and participatory approach in developing the framework; and **welcome** the ‘whole of government’ approach embodied in the framework, which captures the principle of governance across all levels of government, including at the level of subnational governments, cities and local authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> [Aburra Valley – Medellin Declaration of Metropolitan Areas to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework \(2019\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Carta de São Paulo - BIO2020 – Brazilian Perspectives for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework \(2020\)](#)



We continue to **support** the 2050 vision “*living in harmony with nature*” and stand ready with a raised ambition to make a contribution that will deliver a local to global impact, and meaningfully contribute to the long term goals.

We **share the ambition** of the 2030 Mission as was set out in the Zero Draft version of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, ‘*To take urgent action across society to put biodiversity on a path to recovery for the benefit of the planet and people.*’ This ensures a clear pathway towards the 2050 Vision and corresponds with the ambition of subnational governments, cities and local authorities towards addressing the most pressing global challenges, including climate change, disaster risk reduction, health and poverty alleviation, as well as biodiversity.

### **Implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework**

We **welcome** the inclusion of subnational governments, cities and local authorities, as key enablers for the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. However, we **recognise** that our role extends beyond the provision of enabling conditions.

Subnational governments, cities and local authorities play key roles in conserving, restoring and reducing threats to biodiversity, in meeting people’s needs through sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing, in developing the tools and solutions needed for implementing biodiversity protection actions, and in monitoring and reporting.

We **recognise** that our actions in implementing and mainstreaming biodiversity ensure that support mechanisms and enabling conditions are in place at subnational, city and local levels - and that a vertically integrated and cross-cutting governance approach would enhance these efforts.

We **highlight** the significant role that subnational governments, cities and local authorities play in resource mobilisation for implementation and mainstreaming of biodiversity actions. We **stress** the need for immediate and increased efforts to mobilise financial resources at all levels of government and from the private sector.

We are uniquely and most effectively positioned to deliver the outreach, awareness, and uptake of the framework across the whole of society, facilitating engagement with key stakeholders to implement the framework at subnational, city and local levels. Nevertheless, we **recognise** that more can be done to build upon already existing policies and frameworks to ensure the full participation of the whole of society in delivering the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

### **COMMITMENT FOR THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**

Subnational governments, cities and local authorities will continue to build upon our previous efforts, to deliver transformative actions by:

- Recognising the overall value of nature and integrating it into subnational, city and local planning, management and governance instruments;

- Implementing appropriate actions that deliver on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework goals and action targets;
- Aligning biodiversity strategies and actions, and our monitoring and reporting efforts with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), within our subnational, city and local competencies;
- Increasing resource mobilisation for investment in biodiversity action at subnational, city and local levels, and providing incentives to ensure positive outcomes;
- Mainstreaming biodiversity across public, private and business sectors to achieve greater environmental, societal and economic resilience;
- Communicating, educating and raising public awareness with specific efforts to make knowledge available in several languages;
- Strengthening capacity building in order to implement nature-based solutions (NBS) and green and blue infrastructure, particularly through ecosystem based approaches and as a contribution to a green recovery from COVID-19;
- Providing opportunities for knowledge exchange across subnational, city and local levels, and between all sectors of society;
- Sharing best practices across subnational, city and local levels, to efficiently implement transformative actions;
- Delivering convergence with other intergovernmental agreements and processes, taking forward bold and innovative actions at the subnational, city and local level which result in mutually beneficial outcomes.

## CALL FOR ACTION

We subnational governments, cities and local authorities therefore **call upon** Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to;

- I. Take strong and bold actions to bring about transformative change, as outlined in the IPBES global assessment report, in order to halt biodiversity loss.
- II. Recognise the vital role of subnational governments, cities and local authorities, in delivering the 2050 vision of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the 2030 mission as set out in the Zero Draft document; and to explicitly place that recognition throughout the framework text, including the monitoring framework for the goals and targets.
- III. Support the adoption at COP15, of a new dedicated Decision for the greater inclusion of subnational governments, cities and local authorities within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework; that builds upon and renews the *Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020)* as endorsed under Decision X/22; and that significantly raises ambition for subnational, city and local implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework throughout the next decade.
- IV. Establish a multi-stakeholder platform that ensures representation of subnational governments, cities and local authorities to support the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.





We, subnational governments, cities and local authorities, **stand ready** to meet the challenge of delivering, alongside Parties, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, to ensure investment, and play a stronger role in the implementation of the framework through a renewed and significantly stepped-up *Plan of Action for subnational governments, cities and local authorities* for the coming decade.

## EDINBURGH PROCESS PARTNERS



Ms Roseanna Cunningham, MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate  
Change and Land Reform  
On behalf of the Scottish Government



Scottish Government  
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Ms Lesley Griffiths AS/MS  
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Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural  
Affairs  
On behalf of Welsh Government



Llywodraeth Cymru  
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Mr Ashok Sridharan  
ICLEI President  
On behalf of ICLEI - Local Governments  
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Ms Cheryl Jones Fur  
Deputy Lord Mayor of Växjö, Sweden  
On behalf of ICLEI Europe



Ms Elena Moreno  
Regions4 President  
Basque Deputy Minister for Environment  
On behalf of Regions4 Sustainable  
Development



Mr Benoit Charette  
Ministre de l'Environnement et de la Lutte  
contre les changements climatiques  
On behalf of Gouvernement du Québec





Mr Hideaki Ohmura

Governor of Aichi Prefecture

On behalf of the Group of Leading Subnational  
Governments toward the Aichi Biodiversity  
Targets (GoLS)



Under consideration

On Behalf of the European Committee of  
the Regions



European Committee  
of the Regions

**Supported by:**



Ms Francesca Osowska

Chief Executive

On behalf of NatureScot



Mr Simon Milne MBE

Regius Keeper

On Behalf of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



Royal  
Botanic Garden  
Edinburgh

**Dated: 31 August 2020**



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## SIGNATORIES

### SUBNATIONAL, CITY AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b> <b>Organisation</b>	<b>Date Signed</b>
<i>Example: Jo Blogs</i>	<i>Head of Environment and Nature Division</i> <i>Local Council</i>	<i>Xx/Month/2020</i>

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORTERS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b> <b>Organisation</b>	<b>Date Signed</b>
<i>Example: Nat Ure</i>	<i>Director, Nature Company</i>	<i>Xx/Month/2020</i>