

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 232 (2008)¹ Biodiversity policies for urban areas

1. Biological diversity² is a key element for the quality of life on Earth. Its preservation and management are vital for the survival of the planet. Yet worldwide biodiversity reduction is unprecedented and projected to accelerate ten-fold by 2050.

2. Biodiversity erosion is related to human activity and the environmental problems it has generated, in particular climate change, deforestation, habitat loss due to land conversion, pollution and accelerating urbanisation.

3. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe recognises the importance of action taken by the international community to stem biodiversity reduction. It recognises the pioneering role of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats of the Council of Europe. Since 1979 this instrument has offered a framework for the protection of biodiversity.

4. The Congress congratulates the commitments to biodiversity made by governments at the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development which adopted the 2002 Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity to “achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, national and regional levels as a contribution to alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth”.

5. It welcomes the campaigns and strategies implemented by international organisations and networks and by local and regional authorities with a view to realising the 2010 Biodiversity Targets. However, the Congress deplores that these targets are a long way from being reached and recommends that biodiversity should become a political priority in all the member states of the Council of Europe.

6. Urban biodiversity should be fully addressed in all biological diversity instruments, strategies and action plans and in this respect it acknowledges the pioneering role played by the European Landscape Convention (2000) of the Council of Europe which considers urban and peri-urban areas as landscapes to be protected, managed and planned.

7. The Congress is convinced that the fight for biodiversity is a concern for all territorial levels and should be carried out in partnership with all stakeholders, particularly the private sector and civil society. **With this in mind, it welcomes the October 2007 Belgrade Statement on Biodiversity** which particularly acknowledges and supports the growing involvement of regions and local authorities in the achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Targets.

8. It resolutely supports environmental strategies which integrate actions to halt biological diversity loss within the framework of strategies and policies addressing spatial planning, transport and mobility, energy resources and water and waste management.

9. *In the light of the above, the Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:*

a. prepare a recommendation to member states on the challenge of biodiversity loss which takes into account the specificity of urban biodiversity;

b. encourage international institutions and **organisations to integrate urban biodiversity into their activities, policies and instruments which aim to promote, protect and manage biodiversity;**

c. invite the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity to strengthen the involvement of local and regional authorities in the 9th conference to be held in Bonn (Germany) in May 2008 and to ensure that urban biodiversity issues are fully addressed;

d. encourage the different bodies of the Council of Europe, including the Parliamentary Assembly and the secretariat of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, to prepare co-ordinated participation in the International Year of Biodiversity, 2010;

e. ensure that the necessary human resources are available to implement effectively the Enhanced Memorandum of Cooperation between the secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern, 1979).

10. *Furthermore, the Congress invites the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to encourage member and observer states to:*

a. adopt national strategies promoting biodiversity which take into account urban biodiversity and contribute fully to the 2010 Biodiversity Targets;

b. develop action plans which involve local and regional authorities at all stages from elaboration to implementation which should:

i. complement strategies to combat climate change and build upon the positive contribution which decisive and innovative biodiversity action can offer;

ii. consider biodiversity issues when implementing other policies, particularly spatial planning, transport and mobility, energy efficiency and resources, and water and waste management;

iii. take into broader account the positive effects rich biodiversity and a balanced ecosystem can have for society and the economy;

iv. integrate urban bio-indicator systems in the monitoring, management and evaluation of environmental policies;

v. promote awareness-raising and educational programmes on biodiversity and prepare the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 in collaboration with all stakeholders;

vi. encourage public-private partnerships and with civil society to promote and protect biodiversity;

vii. stimulate research and exchange of experiences on urban biodiversity and support training in biodiversity matters.

11. *The Congress also recommends the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to invite the European Union to:*

a. put biodiversity and the achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Targets at the heart of its policies alongside those to combat climate change;

b. consider the elaboration of European policies and instruments which include the protection and promotion of urban biodiversity and take into account the opinion of the Committee of the Regions and the Brabant-Oisterwijk Appeal “Regions as champions for biodiversity 2010”;

c. reinforce co-operation with regional and local authorities in implementing biodiversity policies and action plans and

consider the options for agreements and contracts between the different territorial levels of responsibility;

d. support projects to exchange experiences on biodiversity between territorial collectivities and provide the necessary finances to implement integrated measures.

12. *The Congress invites the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to:*

a. pursue its efforts to draw national parliaments’ attention to the need to implement appropriate legislation consistent with the principles set out above;

b. develop its co-operation with the Congress on biodiversity issues, in particular the preparation of the International Year of Biodiversity, 2010.

1. Debated and approved by the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Local Authorities on 13 March 2008 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 14 March 2008 (see Document CPL(14)11REC, draft recommendation presented by W. Borsus (Belgium, L, ILDG), rapporteur).

2. Biodiversity denotes all life on earth, seen as forming a massive and interdependent system. It covers human beings, animal and plant species, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils and landscape.