

# Declaration of the Regions to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

## Regional Governments – The Key to Mainstreaming Biodiversity Across Sectors

The available scientific evidence, reflected in the Global Biodiversity Outlook 4<sup>1</sup>, suggests that progress towards achieving the Aichi Targets and the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity will not be sufficient to fully achieve their implementation. Current trends indicate that pressures on biological diversity will continue to increase, despite the efforts and achievements made to date.

We the regional governments<sup>2</sup> gathered in the International Conference on Biodiversity "Territorios Diversos, Territorios de Derechos" (A territorial rights-based approach to biodiversity), in Cuenca, Ecuador, 21-22 June 2018, recognize that we are an essential part of the response to the critical situation of our biodiversity and, together with our partners in the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD) and the Consortium of Provincial Governments of Ecuador (CONGOPE), issue this common declaration, which will serve to feed into the discussions in view of the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP14), which will be held in the city of Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, from 17 to 29 November 2018.

In that sense, it is of vital importance that regional governments and our allies in the local governments, civil society, and other networks join us in the proclamation of a common message for the Parties, within the COP14, that is capable of contributing to the achievement of global biodiversity objectives beyond 2020.

We know from several success stories at the subnational level<sup>3</sup> that there are concrete ways to protect the biodiversity of our territories and achieve a common vision by 2050<sup>4</sup> to stop the loss of global biological diversity, as through ecosystem-based approaches and the decentralized initiatives to implement the SDGs.

We are aware that, in order to achieve these objectives, we need to implement changes that include a more efficient use of land, water, energy, and materials, and generate great transformations in economic development systems to reflect this vision. Therefore, we need the engagement and participation of the private sector to support us in mainstreaming biodiversity across all sectors<sup>5</sup>.

We acknowledge that a large number of traditional communities and indigenous peoples are closely dependent on the biological resources on which their traditions are based, and recognize that their traditional knowledge, innovation and practices are key to preserve biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of its elements.

Inspired by the exchange of knowledge, learning and solidarity showed by the regions within the initiatives Regions4Biodiversity and RegionsAdapt led by nrg4SD, and welcoming the leadership and contributions of regions within the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments to the CBD, we invite the Parties to the CBD to take into account the message we convey here in their deliberations.

<sup>1</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2014), Global Biodiversity Outlook 4. Montreal, 155 pages, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> The term refers to the first immediate government level below the national and above the local level. It involves governments as states, provinces, domains, territories, länder, cantons, autonomous communities, provinces, etc., depending on the country. Regional governments are different from "local governments", which include all government levels below the regional level.

<sup>3</sup> The subnational level brings together the regional and local governments in decentralized states, hence any infra-state administrative authority.

<sup>4</sup> Vision for 2050 of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity: "By 2050, biological diversity is valued, preserved, restored and used in a rational manner, maintaining the services of ecosystems, sustaining a healthy planet and providing essential benefits for all."

<sup>5</sup> Agenda item 22, of COP 14.

## Position for the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

We welcome the South Sinai Governorate hosting the CBD COP 14 and we identify the extraordinary opportunity to bring together regional leaders from across the globe in the frame of the 6th Global Summit of Local and Subnational Leaders.

We restate our concern about the progress of the Aichi Targets and the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and we confirm our will to contribute to the dialogues on biodiversity at COP 14. Therefore, we invite the Parties to the Convention to:

1. Invite the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to collaborate with regional governments in the implementation of a regional approach to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as to strengthen rural territories and facilitate their development, while fostering greater investments in environmental matters, which ensure their maintenance as key areas for the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
2. Generate spaces for dialogue to strengthen alliances between all government levels, civil society, including indigenous, and rural communities, as well as women's groups, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, in order to reach consensus agreements in a transparent manner that will promote sustainable and inclusive practices in rural territories;
3. Incorporate traditional knowledge into policies and actions as an essential source of cultural diversity and identity of the territories, and guarantee the protection of rights of indigenous communities;
4. Recognize the important role rural and indigenous women have played in many world territories as producers and suppliers of food and integrate their practical experience and key knowledge in the spheres of local ecosystems and species, genetic resources management and the preservation of agro-diversity;
5. Adopt innovative solutions that are integrated into ecosystem approaches at all governance levels as a means to simultaneously improve the preservation of biodiversity and promote adaptation to and mitigation of climate change;
6. Involve the voice of regional leaders in the definition of the global biodiversity framework beyond 2020, considering the efforts currently made by regional governments to contribute to this dialogue; particularly, through the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments (ACSNG) before the CBD and the initiatives it includes, such as the Regions for Biodiversity Learning Platform and the Group of Leading Governments for the achievement of the Aichi Targets (GoLS);
7. Recognize the key role played by regional governments together with the Parties to the Convention in integrating the challenges that affect biodiversity in the energy, mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, processing and health industries, including the promotion of financial and tax instruments favourable to the preservation of the natural heritage and action plans favouring the transition to new economic models, such as the circular economy;
8. Urge companies and the private sector to implement stronger efforts in terms of the social and environmental responsibility of their companies to generate measurable impacts in the productive sectors; thus, contributing to the global biodiversity objectives;
9. Drive and develop climate financing pathways for biodiversity and sustainable development focused on implementing actions in the regional territories.

We acknowledge that this Declaration is part of the subnational global efforts towards the CBD COP14 and we align our efforts to those of the Subnational Coalition for Biodiversity Action, led by the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments, which is coordinated by nrg4SD.

## **Annex: Regional Governments – The Key to Mainstreaming Biodiversity Across Sectors**

Regional governments usually have specific competences for productive and environmental management in their territories, which usually involve more than one ecosystem, a sub-basin or several geographical landscapes. Their territorial competences and the possibility of articulating national and local agents make them the key government level to advance the development and biodiversity agenda, and include the sustainability criterion of production and extraction activities.

According to the analysis of the main forestry, agricultural, livestock and fishing activities<sup>6</sup>, published in the Global Biodiversity Outlook 4, these sectors are responsible for 70% of the projected loss of terrestrial biodiversity and are mainly carried out in rural sectors. According to FAO data<sup>7</sup>, there are still 2,100 million poor people and most of them live in rural areas. Therefore, it is essential to understand, from our territorial competences, the interdependence of our society and the natural resources and services provided by the ecosystems, as well as the imbalances between urban, rural and natural areas, in order to effectively address the productive sectors of economy.

To overcome the inequality gaps leading to the unsustainable use of land and affecting the loss of species and the health of ecosystems, it is necessary that land planning considers the link between the urban and rural spheres, the creation of greater citizen awareness about the conditions of the rural sector and the search for territorial balance through policies that reduce development gaps.

### **Urban/rural interdependence**

The relationship of interdependence between the rural and urban world represents challenges to achieve an environmental balance; however, it also offers opportunities to mobilise towards an inclusive and sustainable development that guarantees the preservation of biodiversity in all territories by applying the Aichi Targets and the CBD. In that sense, we acknowledge the need to link the preservation of biodiversity to the achievement of each of them. To achieve this, it is essential to highlight the urban-rural interdependence and the need to overcome the inequity gaps that lead to overexploitation of natural resources, the impact of infrastructures, the unsustainable use of land, land abandonment and the loss of endangered species.

We invite people to promote dialogue efforts that allow us to strengthen alliances between all levels of government, civil society – including indigenous and rural communities –, academia, the private sector and non-governmental organisations to promote, in a transparent manner, sustainable practices that address the challenge of balance and territorial cohesion, as well as the interdependence between the rural and urban spheres, to stop the loss of biodiversity, to effectively and adaptively preserve the natural heritage and the restoration of ecosystems, as well as the achievement of the SDGs in that context.

### **Traditional knowledge and indigenous peoples**

We regional governments have worked to forge alliances with indigenous peoples and have managed, as is the case of the Constitution of Ecuador (2008), to incorporate traditional knowledge to generate sustainable development models at the regional level. In that sense, we consider it essential to continue this dialogue, led by the regional governments and the indigenous peoples of each of our jurisdictions, to move towards the construction of a global biodiversity framework after 2020 and in harmony with the Vision on Biological Diversity for 2050.

We emphasise that it is crucial to recognise that traditional knowledge continues to decline, as indicated by the loss of cultural diversity and the large-scale displacement of indigenous communities, and that it is urgent to reverse and

<sup>6</sup> Global Biodiversity Outlook 4: Mid-term evaluation of progress in the implementation of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. P. 10

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-c0376s.pdf>

stop this.

It is essential to pay attention to the situation of rural women, who are the guardians of seeds, the caretakers of water sources, the carriers of the healing power of plants, the conveyors of a series of cultural features that have to do with the uses of the food, animals and spaces surrounding them. Rural women are the first people affected by droughts, climate changes and migration to cities. In practice, despite the asymmetries between men and women in our rural population, it is women who have taken the lead in defending nature.

We recognise that, in order to win the fight against extreme poverty and hunger (SDG 1 and 2), we need to empower rural women (SDG 5), who make important contributions to food and nutrition security in each of our territories, and in many cases have not yet received recognition, support and attention in a broad and inclusive manner. We commit ourselves to creating the conditions for an equitable development with a gender perspective, mainly revolving around the preservation of agro-diversity and traditional knowledge.

### **Accelerating the implementation of Aichi Targets in building a new horizon**

We express our concern about the lack of progress towards the achievement of the Aichi Targets and reiterate our commitment to continue implementing the objectives of eco-democracy, which are based on the promotion of bottom-up strategies and participatory dialogue. This, with the aim of contributing decisively to the Aichi Targets and generating a framework of objectives beyond 2020 that allows regional governments to participate with their leadership and experience towards these objectives.

To do this, we reconfirm our commitment to the implementation of regional biodiversity strategies and action plans.

We will take this opportunity of COP 14 to communicate to the CBD Secretariat and the Parties through the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments<sup>8</sup> (AC SNG) our commitments, goals and actions that contribute to the implementation of the Aichi Targets. In this regard, we state that we are prepared to contribute in a complementary manner and based on our leadership, capacities, experiences and competences to the efforts made by the Parties in the achievement of global objectives.

### **Integration of biodiversity in productive sectors**

Nature is the engine of local development and economic dynamism. We are committed to promoting the compatibility of tourism, sports and outdoor leisure activities, as well as the preservation of nature and socio-economic development, and to promote the development of new economic activities and eco-entrepreneurship.

We recognise that integrating biodiversity in the energy, mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, processing and health industries is key to advancing the global biodiversity agenda, its current and future objectives, as these industries generate an environmental impact we must address and minimise in our territories.

We commit ourselves to studying these industry trends, to advancing and updating our regional approaches and plans for mainstreaming biodiversity, so that they adapt to these trends, while reviewing and updating our territorial policies whenever necessary.

In this regard, we invite the business community and the private sector to collaborate in this articulation to jointly address the underlying causes of the loss of biological diversity.

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<sup>8</sup> Official platform created by the CBD in Decision X/22 within the Global Partnership to channel the voice and contributions of the regions to the CBD and its Parties. Currently coordinated by the nrg4SD.



## Knowledge and communication platforms to promote collaboration between all government levels

It is essential to promote knowledge, communication and collaboration platforms at all government levels sharing the aim of creating sustainable, resilient and biodiverse territories.

Experiences of vertical and multilevel integration in some decentralised countries show successful examples of the implementation of actions to safeguard biodiversity that generate support and collaboration spaces to achieve aligned results.

Having the perspective of indigenous peoples and local communities in these spaces is essential, in order to jointly address the complex challenge of integrating biodiversity in the productive sectors. In this sense, we invite you to consider, as an essential part of these efforts, the private sector and the social and environmental responsibility of companies.

Regional collaboration networks and platforms, such as the nrg4SD and its cooperation and exchange initiatives between regions, are essential to advance, in a decentralised and unified manner, the regions' message aimed at the Parties to the Convention and are the space where vertical integration materialises. The 6th Global Summit of Local and Subnational Leaders, parallel to CBD COP14, co-organised by the nrg4SD together with ICLEI, is an opportunity to materialise our contributions.

## Cross-sector Integration: the Goals of Sustainable Development

It is important to highlight the results generated by the actions focused on achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In addition to those directly related to Goal 15, with regard to land ecosystems, it is important to consider the contribution of biodiversity and ecosystem services to poverty reduction (SDG 1), the empowerment of women (SDG 5) and the provision of a healthy environment, while preserving water sources (SDG 6) and improving the health of all (SDG 3).

In this regard, we emphasise the need for an integrated territorial approach to those action plans or strategies focused on the implementation of the SDGs in our regions. We will delve into the achievement of this broad and ambitious agenda to ensure the proper incorporation of biodiversity, as we consider it essential to recognise the need to preserve biodiversity as a critical factor for agricultural production, water quality and availability, soil protection, the fight against climate change (SDG 13) and all the interrelated issues in the SDGs.

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