

Achieving SDGs in times of global crises



Side Event 19

Biodiverse and Resilient Cities



6 JUNE 2023, 1:15 pm -2:15 pm



Conference Room 7

SUMMARY

Cities play a key role in addressing biodiversity loss, as well as the crises of climate change, pollution and public health. Currently, they not only concentrate more than 50% of the world's population and generate 80% of the global gross domestic product but are also responsible for producing 75% of global carbon emissions. In this sense, since they hold most of the people and economic output, cities offer unique spatial efficiency. They also have great potential as drivers of innovation and in producing solutions that incorporate new alternative ideas to the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

Thus, including nature and biodiversity as a core part of urban development is a path we aim to pursue. In this context, there is a need to adopt new ways of relating to nature and biodiversity in order to create more economically and socially prosperous societies. The recently issued Dasgupta review showed how as a society we have failed in incorporating the economic costs of biodiversity degradation into GDP.

Therefore, adopting new measures can represent important fiscal savings for the economy of cities. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has further evidenced the importance of urban systems in promoting disease prevention and control strategies, as well as the vital service public spaces and urban green areas offer to mental, physical and emotional health and well-being of people and communities.

A nature positive approach can bring benefits to different aspects of urban life. It contributes to improve the conditions of these environments by favoring the supply of oxygen, CO₂ fixation, reduction of atmospheric pollution, regulation of humidity and high temperatures, damping of noise and control of soil erosion processes.

Likewise, extended green areas in urban spaces help control pests and encourage cross-pollination. Public health can also be improved by reducing particulate matter and increasing public space usage through an improved green cover; energy consumption and household electricity costs due to AC can be reduced by decreasing the heat island effect, and public infrastructure can be more resilient, through the deployment of nature-based solutions (NbS), such as sustainable drainage systems that improve the water cycle and reduce pressure and demand on storm drainage systems.

The adaptation approach as the initiatives and measures aimed at reducing the vulnerability of natural and human systems to the real or expected effects of climate change, suggests that the different NbS approaches can be used in combination with other types of interventions and help in this way to generate multiple benefits for populations, biodiversity and at the same time strengthen resilience of cities.



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It is also necessary to reinforce the principle that the landscape is a fact of general interest and a collective nature, with outstanding features among which the territorial planning around water and the recognition of the ecosystems that sustain it is an essential part of the right to environmental quality in which urban life develops.

Considering how cities have underestimated the value of biodiversity, we propose a draft resolution aimed to solve the long-documented disconnect between cities and nature, bringing the value of biodiversity to the center, through a model of cities and biodiversity called Biodiverse and Resilient Cities.

This model and draft resolution seeks to transform cities in the short, medium, and long term by mainstreaming biodiversity in urban planning and promoting the sustainable use and protection of biodiversity and ecosystems. This is based on the idea that urban areas are not only centers of economic and social development, but also important spaces for biodiversity and for promoting processes of ecological connectivity between urban and rural areas.

Organizer(s)

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Moderator

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