

Report

To:	Climate Change and Sustainability Committee
Date:	28 April 2021
Prepared by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Edinburgh Declaration
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1. Purpose of the report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:

- ◆ Set out the background to the “Edinburgh Declaration” and recommend that the Council signs the declaration.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation:

- (1) that the Council supports COSLA signing the Edinburgh Declaration on behalf of Scottish local authorities
- (2) that the Council agrees to sign the “Edinburgh Declaration” as a standalone Council.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Edinburgh Declaration is a statement calling on national governments as parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to adopt an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework and include sub-national governments, at the COP 15 global summit for biodiversity in May. COP 15 is widely anticipated as being equivalent to the UN Paris Climate Agreement moment for biodiversity. A copy of the declaration is provided in Appendix 1.
- 3.2. The 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 the result of online consultation, the Edinburgh Process, formally mandated by the CBD to collate sub-national views. It is a primary means for local governments to be formally represented in the international process and show political support for global action. The Declaration will be presented at COP 15 bringing visibility to its signatories and the wider sub-national constituency.
- 3.3. The Declaration expresses concern for global biodiversity loss and seeks to encourage agencies at all levels along with stakeholders to work together to address this matter. As such it welcomes the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, draft 2030 mission and 2050 targets and stresses subnational governments’ role in implementation, mainstreaming and finance.

- 3.4. The Declaration contains a commitment, which is already delivered by Scottish local authorities under the Biodiversity and Climate Change legal duties. The commitment is more intended to raise awareness of the types of activities local authorities can undertake within the broader international community and directed at national governments in countries where co-operation with local government remains low.
- 3.5. Nevertheless, signatories agree in principle to build on previous efforts, recognising the value of nature, implement appropriate actions that deliver on global goals and mainstream, integrating into local planning, management and governance. There are other activities included in the commitment such as strengthening capacity building to deliver nature-based solutions (NBS) and green and blue infrastructure, but together this represents only a broad statement of intent.
- 3.6. The Declaration concludes with a call for action which, as mentioned, is the primary purpose of this document. The call is on national governments negotiating the new global framework and targets to take bold action with local and regional authorities recognised as key partners. Edinburgh Process partners are also recommending an updated Plan Action for engagement with regional and local governments to accompany the global framework and a new multi-stakeholder implementation platform for oversight.
- 3.7. At the time of preparing the report, the following have signed the declaration: Aberdeenshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Stirling Council, both national park Authorities, cities of Quintana Roo in Mexico, Jinja in Uganda and Berlin in Germany have recently signed. The UK Government has also become a supporting party of the Edinburgh Declaration.

4. **Edinburgh Declaration Rationale and Benefits**

Rationale

- 4.1. 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 and resourcing of sub-national, regional and local actors vis-à-vis their national counterparts. By leading this international consultation of local authorities, it demonstrates willingness to involve government at all levels over the next decade toward the shared ambition of international targets.
- 4.2. It is recognised that not every signee will meet all commitments in the Declaration. Rather, the Declaration signals, at an international level, a collective desire for targets to be met collaboratively, building on the unique contribution of Local Government.
- 4.3. There will be no accompanying delivery plan and there will be no individual monitoring or reporting requirement, however, the Council will continue to formally report every three years against our statutory Biodiversity Duty. It will however be referenced in national reporting to the CBD led by NatureScot who, alongside Scottish Government, are keen for COSLA support.
- 4.4. The main benefit for Scottish local government is to show leadership and bring attention to our commitment to both climate change and to international engagement. By signing this, it gives political support to ongoing advocacy by the international municipal community to ensure international agreements are sensitive to local government competences. A strengthened role for local governments has potential benefit for local governments across the world encouraging multi-level governance approaches and positive impacts on capacity and resources allocated locally by national governments.

- 4.5. Signatory shows COSLA as an active and committed international partner that recognises benefit in collaborating with international peers, in advance of COP15 and COP26. Supporting this common effort together with local governments beyond Europe and from the global south underscores our support to a just transition and to climate justice.
- 4.6. Future Scottish policy will be aligned with targets reached at COP15 and COSLA engagement aims to increase Scottish Council awareness and involvement in the process before global targets are agreed and taken up in Scotland. COSLA officers are working to ensure that local government views including from Local Biodiversity Action Partnerships are incorporated at an early stage in the Scottish response to COP15.

Benefits

- 4.7. Reputation: this is an opportunity for the council to renew its commitment to tackle climate change and develop biodiversity. The pledge is aligned with the objectives and approach of the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and the Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan. Reputational benefits would be at local (South Lanarkshire employees and residents), national and international levels.
- 4.8. Raising awareness: the signature could also be an opportunity to share information with employees and residents about the impact of biodiversity on climate change and encourage positive behavioural changes.
- 4.9. Peer learning: a platform for signatories will be provided to share best practices and encourage collaboration with the organisation of events.

5 Proposal and Next Steps

- 5.1. COSLA will sign the Declaration on behalf of councils subject to final endorsement by COSLA Leaders before May 2021 and then outline how individual local authorities can sign the document if deemed appropriate locally. Given the timing and frequency of this Committee, it is considered appropriate to report this matter now and that any signing of the declaration would follow the endorsement by COSLA.
- 5.2. If the recommendation is approved and the council becomes part of the signatories, officers will work with the corporate communication team to promote it (e.g social media, articles, events). In doing this, officers will seek to make it clear that this is South Lanarkshire Council's commitment to the declaration to avoid any potential confusion that may arise with the use of Edinburgh in its title. As part of this, officers would also take the opportunity to share information about the impact of biodiversity on climate change and inform residents and employees about council initiatives in this area.

6. Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.1. As a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was required for the Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan and given the fact that the commitments of the Declaration are aligned with this strategy, it is assumed that no SEA will be required.

7 Employee Implications

- 7.1. There are no additional employee implications except actions to communicate on the signature.

8 Financial implications

- 8.1. There are no additional financial implications.

9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 9.1. Given the nature of the declaration, there are direct implications in terms of Climate Change, Sustainability and Environment. Signing the declaration will help to raise awareness about the impact of biodiversity on climate change and encourage behavioural changes in employees and residents. It will also encourage the development of actions at different levels from local to international level. It is also an opportunity to learn from other sub-national governments and potentially develop further actions in the council area.

10. Other implications

- 10.1. No other implications are expected.

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 11.1. Since the Equalities Impact Assessment of the Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan has been approved and given the fact that the commitments of the Declaration are aligned with this strategy, it is assumed that no additional assessment should be conducted.

Michael McGlynn

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

6 April 2021

Link(s) to council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Work with communities and partners to promote high quality, thriving and sustainable communities.

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ COSLA Briefing on the Edinburgh Declaration

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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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 intent¹², and in particular the results achieved through the outputs of the 5th and 6th 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.

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

² [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



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On behalf of the Scottish Government



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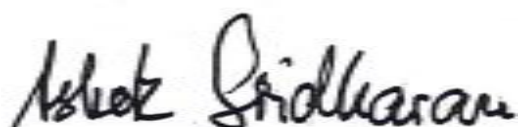
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion
Gwledig

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On behalf of Gouvernement du Québec





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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:



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On Behalf of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



**Royal
Botanic Garden
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