

Executive Director's Message on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity

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This year and on this very day, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Eight percent of the 8,300 known animal breeds are already extinct, and 22 percent are vulnerable to extinction. Only one percent of the more than 80,000 tree species in the world have been studied for beneficial uses. Entire ecosystems are sustained by

micro-organisms and invertebrates, but their importance is still relatively unknown and rarely acknowledged.

The world's biological diversity is ever more under attack, which is also amplified in this era of increasing urbanisation. Roads, high-rise buildings and settlements are constructed in areas where animals, plants and other organisms once lived. This leads to habitat degradation – and sometimes their complete loss – and to the destruction of ecosystems.

Saving biological diversity is not the responsibility of one individual, community, organisation, or nation alone. It is the world's collective responsibility, as we – and our children – will all feel the consequences of its further reduction. UN-Habitat thus bears an equally great responsibility in conservation and in helping preserve species variety.

Cities can work to promote urban biological diversity. Birds, insects, plants, and other organisms have all, in one way or another, made urban areas their habitats, and accommodating them does not require much. Urban forest or wildlife programmes, community gardens, and civic efforts to plant trees and shrubs, can go a long way in promoting wildlife. The benefits of this will go a long way – not only through providing more green spaces for city dwellers to enjoy, but also in the long term, in contributing to climate stability. In designing, planning and managing cities with nature in mind, we will go beyond ensuring biodiversity: we will make our cities more liveable and more sustainable for their residents.

Today, on the International Day for Biological Diversity, at UN-Habitat, we join hands with UN Environment, other UN agencies, and the rest of the world to ensure resilient ecosystems, sustainable use of biological resources, and the promotion of eco-diversity.