Joint Statement for the 5th Global Biodiversity Summit of Cities and Subnational Governments, held December 9 to 11, 2016, in Cancun, Mexico
Almost 10 years ago, the United Nations announced that the majority of the world’s population now lives in urban areas. In this context, preserving ecosystems and biodiversity is all the more important to cities and citizens for improving health and quality of life. The benefits of having natural environments in the city are well known: they mitigate heat islands, improve air quality, promote at-the-source rainwater collection, enhance urban landscapes, have a positive impact on cognitive and psychological health, and strengthen social ties.

Public policies must therefore take a new approach to city planning. Biodiversity has to be a pivotal component of their actions, and all community stakeholders need to get involved to meet local wants and needs while helping achieve national and international biodiversity objectives.

At the end of the first United Nations cities and biodiversity meeting, in 2007, the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) stressed that the fight for biodiversity would be won or lost in cities, and that protecting biodiversity was first and foremost a local matter. Montréal, home of the CBD Secretariat, and Paris, host city of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, are proud to take up the challenge.

In the spirit of their 2015–2017 cooperation project on urban ecology and greening, “Paris - Montréal : intersecting views on urban ecology and increased vegetation cover,” backed by the governments of Québec and France, and funded by a joint France–Québec fund for decentralized cooperation (Fonds franco-québécois pour la coopération décentralisée), the two cities today affirm their joint commitment to protecting biodiversity through concrete actions that will benefit residents.

I. Kindling the collective consciousness: Biodiversity is everyone’s business

Biodiversity is a collective concern that the entire community must strive to protect and enhance, including municipalities, residents, researchers, scientists, representatives of non-profit associations or organizations, large institutional owners, and private businesses. Cities bring together a large number of dynamic stakeholders whose expertise and complementary roles can be leveraged to step up efforts in favor of biodiversity. This collaborative approach is critical for pooling knowledge and developing a shared vision that leads to coherent action.

Montréal and Paris are developing and sharing knowledge to spark reflection on biodiversity with all society stakeholders.

IN PARIS,

three major documents were drafted in 2015 in the wake of the collaborative report from the first Biodiversity Plan: “La biodiversité à Paris : un état des lieux,” an overview of biodiversity in Paris aimed at experts; “Un portrait de la biodiversité,” a snapshot of biodiversity written for the general public; and the “Singapore Index-Paris,” a self-assessment tool for greater global visibility. These publications helped raise awareness and mobilize all concerned stakeholders.

A new co-constructive approach with residents is currently underway in all Paris boroughs to help develop the new Biodiversity Plan. Multiple cooperative tools have been used in this process, including citizen workshops and an Internet platform Incorporating Paris data into the Île-de-France regional database and promoting participatory science that is open to all helps boost common knowledge and strengthens the synergy between all stakeholders in the region.

The City of Paris has also introduced innovative ways to get residents to take ownership of public spaces, including issuing “gardening permits” for people to...
plant street gardens or create green streets, streets where plants grow on the sidewalks, in the middle of the streets and in front of buildings, street where citizens can garden and meet each other. The participatory budget allotted year after year demonstrates that Parisians are increasingly embracing nature, to the benefit of biodiversity.

IN MONTRÉAL,

the 2013 Biodiversity Report, an overview of biodiversity and biodiversity management produced by Ville de Montréal and various community stakeholders, reflects a shared diagnosis and vision. The report is available online and was launched as part of “Urban Biodiversity, a Value to Appreciate,” an event organized in conjunction with the CBD Secretariat, ICLEI, and other partners that brought 150 local and international participants including the Paris, to Montréal to discuss biodiversity issues.

Consulting with community stakeholders is an integral part of the process, as evidenced by the joint approach to developing conceptual plans for Montréal ecoterritories, as well as the recent consultation of 16,000 users to help establish the vision for planning and developing the Large Parks Network. Education activities offered year round in large parks by Montréal’s partners, as well as environmental action days, provide information to citizens and give them concrete ways to support the environment, for example, by preventing the spread of invasive pests.

Montréal’s participation in exchange networks such as Quebec Municipalities Council for Biodiversity, coordinated by Réseau environnement, allows cities to discuss the challenges it faces and share best practices for promoting biodiversity in an urban environment. The use of innovative technology, including airborne data acquisition, also makes it possible to paint an accurate picture of the city’s tree heritage and analyze its biodiversity.

Results of the Paris–Montréal collaboration: Improved strategies and approaches and optimized work methods.

In the spirit of building and sharing knowledge, Montréal and Paris have pooled their experiences to improve their respective strategies and approaches on biodiversity. Despite their different sizes and characteristics, Paris and Montréal present a similar vision, employ the same kind of technical language, and use tools to meet the same objectives. The two municipalities worked together to examine the specifics of their initiatives on many levels, from the role of trees and urban biodiversity to water management, creation of educational urban walkways, and more. They also held in-depth discussions about the best methods for working with stakeholders.

II. Reinventing the city to blend nature and urban living

Faced with the problems that come with climate change, air and water pollution, and species facing extinction, communities are seeking to build cities with a better balance between natural and built environments. Yet preserving biodiversity and bringing more nature into the city pose a considerable challenge for urban areas under continuous development. Striking a balance between nature and urban living takes an innovative approaches and practical changes by all stakeholders.

Montréal and Paris protect reservoirs of biodiversity, strengthen ecological continuity, and foster sustainable urbanisation.

IN PARIS,

the 2014–2020 greening objectives are ambitious and closely intertwined: put up 100 ha of green roofs, walls, and facades, with one-third used for urban agriculture; plant 20,000 additional trees; open 30 hectares of new green spaces to the public, make public spaces greener, restore the Petite Ceinture “small belt” railway; and so on. These actions are in
line with the plan to build a network of natural green and blue corridors in Paris, thereby creating ecological continuities that allow species to move in accordance with the Île-de-France regional ecological coherence plan.

The July 2016 vote on general amendments to the local urban land-use Plan bolstered regulations to foster green building initiatives, notably with regard to roofs located in the center of city blocks and adjacent to public spaces. With this new Plan, 11 ha of green spaces will be added to the 807 ha already protected.

Broad ecological management measures were introduced for municipal green spaces (including cemeteries), such as stopping the use of pesticides, adopting differentiated management, and planting regional plant species.

**IN MONTREAL,**

after reaching the initial objective of the Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats, a new target was set to expand protected areas to 10% of the land. Taking into account the protected areas in major water bodies such as the St. Lawrence River, over 17% of the land is already protected, which is in line with the international target. Montréal wants to go further, with an ambition to allow citizens to benefit even more from these invaluable ecosystem services.

In this vein, the City is also continuously improving its Large Parks Network, as illustrated this spring by the opening of the new Bois-de-Saraguay nature park. For the past 20 years, the Ecosystem Management Program in large parks has allowed the public to enjoy these outstanding locations—which offer a wealth of biodiversity and outdoor activities in an urban environment—while protecting their ecological integrity.

Ville de Montréal boasts an ambitious integrated urban forest management program, with objectives such as increasing the tree canopy by 20% to 25% and planting 300,000 trees on public and private land in the next 10 years. In neighborhoods, pilot projects aim to foster the presence of three vegetation strata, install larger tree pits, and implement innovative measures for collecting and treating rainwater. For over a decade, the bans in place under the By-law concerning pesticide use have promoted human health and ecosystem health across the Montréal area.

**Results of the Paris–Montréal collaboration:** Stronger tools for protecting reservoirs of biodiversity and improving connectivity and emblematic projects in Montréal and Paris.

Both cities have embraced the concept of green and blue corridors. Cooperation between Paris and Montréal has helped bolster each city’s respective tools for protecting reservoirs of diversity and expanding ecological continuities in urban environments. Efforts are also underway to share innovative technological tools for fostering connectivity. By enlisting experts to work together on the “Parisculteurs” project in Paris and the “Pedestrian and shared streets” project in Montréal, the two cities are reinventing the concept of a sustainable green city. Both cities will also be unveiling emblematic projects, including innovative green roofs designed to foster biodiversity while mitigating the impact of heat islands in dense urban environments.

**III. Promoting biodiversity in the heart of cities, in accordance with regional, national, and international directions**

Developing strategic tools at the municipal level is key to protecting and strengthening biodiversity. Since biodiversity is a crosscutting issue, it is very important to tie biodiversity issues in with major environmental and sustainable development themes and make sure they are included in the city’s other strategic plans. Another important way to increase the impact of the actions taken is to ensure they comply with the strategic directions set by various levels of government.

Paris and Montréal are acting locally” in a global perspective.

**IN PARIS,**

the city adopted its first Biodiversity Plan in 2011 and conducted a cooperative process to draft a new plan (to be enacted in early 2017) in order to structure and coordinate local actions in favor of preserving and strengthening biodiversity in Paris. These strategies
are in line with other major land use plans for our municipal area (Energy Climate Plan, Blue Book on Water, Sustainable Food Plan, etc.) as well as with the urban land-use Plan. The Plan’s general modification adopted in July was the opportunity to reinforce the presence of the presence of nature in the city.

The City of Paris has embraced the new “Regional Biodiversity Charter” and the national biodiversity strategy, which will help make it easier to meet regional and national goals to preserve living organisms.

The future Paris Biodiversity Plan will adapt to changes in national legislation and regulations, specifically the August 2016 law on restoring biodiversity, nature, and landscapes.

The results of the Singapore Index on Cities’ Biodiversity assessment on Paris in 2015 allows the city’s to contribute to the global dialogue on biodiversity in urban areas.

IN MONTRÉAL,

in addition to implementing tools specifically designed to protect biodiversity, such as the Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats and the Ecosystem Management Program, the city also incorporated biodiversity initiatives in a variety of municipal planning and action tools, such as the Land Use and Development Plan, the Urban Forest Integrated Management Plan, the Climate Change Adaptation Plan, the Sustainable Montréal 2016–2020 Plan, and the Water Plan.

Montréal’s biodiversity policies are in line with the Metropolitan Land Use and Development Plan of the Montréal Metropolitan Community and can help establish the planned regional green and blue corridor. They are also consistent with the provincial and national directions addressing shared concerns such as the preservation of at-risk species and the fight against invasive species.

Montréal is proud to have been involved with the Advisory Committee on Cities and Biodiversity of the Global Partnership on Local and Subnational Action for Biodiversity since day one, contributing to international thinking on the role of cities and the issues of urban environments.

Results of the Paris–Montréal collaboration: Increased support for implementation of the CBD, a call to mobilize cities and forge partnerships, and promotion of governments’ support for decentralized cooperation.

The drafting of this joint declaration for the 13th Conference of the Parties to the CBD is one of the major achievements of the Paris–Montréal collaboration, and it will be released to local and international partners to foster greater municipal engagement and build synergies. Through the France–Québec fund for decentralized cooperation (Fonds franco-québécois pour la coopération décentralisée), the Québec and French governments have affirmed their support for the pooling of municipal expertise on greening and biodiversity by backing the collaboration between Paris and Montréal. The combined actions of the two municipalities and the mutual improvements made as a result maximize Paris’s and Montréal’s contribution to CBD objectives. For instance, the Singapore Index on Cities’ Biodiversity assessment of Paris, an initiative coordinated by Singapore and the CBD Secretariat, was made possible thanks to the sharing of Montréal and Paris expertise on testing Index’s various indicators.
An important contribution to implementation of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

Paris and Montréal are proud to participate in this international movement by contributing to a number of the Aichi biodiversity targets adopted by the CBD in 2010 as part of the International Year of Biodiversity. Both municipalities have helped further the global efforts to raise collective awareness of the value of biodiversity, reduce the deterioration and fragmentation of natural habitats, prevent the spread of invasive species, establish protected areas that cover 17% of terrestrial areas and inland waters and create ecological networks of protected natural environment, protect at-risk species, promote resilience and carbon storage, and contribute to and disseminate scientific knowledge on biodiversity.

Today, urban communities are major centers of innovation and fertile hubs of expertise able to bring minds together to exchange and share their knowledge. By taking fresh, renewed approaches and working together to create inclusive green cities, we contribute to the health of our ecosystems and the sustainable well-being of our populations.

In the fall of 2015, the United Nations adopted new Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 11 aimed at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. A few weeks ago, the New Urban Agenda, which stresses the importance of getting cities involved in protecting biodiversity, was adopted at the Habitat III international conference. It is now clear that the time has come for urban communities to step up their efforts to bring these goals to life for a better quality of life on Earth.

Cities today are decisive players of the global ecological transition. Because biodiversity is a collective wealth, Montréal and Paris are making a strong commitment, and getting involved with conviction, enthusiasm and optimism so that, together, cities of the world bring concrete, pragmatic, and efficient solutions to biodiversity loss. We invite you to join us after the plenary session to work with the CBD Secretariat to create a network of engaged cities and a dynamic and enriching international platform aimed at protecting and enhancing urban biodiversity.

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