



ENVIRONMENT HOUSE

NEWS

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A periodic update on the Geneva Environment Network and the International Environment House, Geneva

The role of cities in sustainable development

By Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The increasing importance of cities for the environment makes the "Green Cities" theme of World Environment Day 2005 very timely. The environmental problems of cities in developing countries, and especially megacities, are posing serious health threats to many urban residents. Cities are also making increasingly important contributions – both positive and negative – to environmental issues at the national, regional and global levels.

While the process of urbanization has come to a halt in the developed world, cities in developing countries are still growing rapidly, gaining a combined total of 60 million people per year. Most of this growth takes place in poorer neighbourhoods. For example, Dar es

Salaam is growing at an annual rate of 6 per cent, which implies that its population is doubling every 12 years. In 1950 there were 86 cities of more than one million inhabitants, while today there are 380 – the great majority in the developing world.

We need to find ways to address the problems and to manage urbanization in developing countries. Many of today's problems result from poor management of the urbanization process and from ignoring the link between environment and development.

Cities as good neighbours

Ensuring sustainable urbanization is not only an urban issue. Most cities get their natural resources from the surrounding rural areas.

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Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape SAEFL

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NatureNotes

Going bats

Geneva goes bats in August. Along with cities all over Europe, it hosts a 'Bat Night', sponsored by the Geneva Natural History Museum, to educate people about bats and to encourage conservation of these amazing and often misunderstood mammals.



The pipistrelle (left) is our smallest bat, and is often mistaken for a small bird at dusk. Its body is only about 4 cm long. It is common in Geneva, and also in the Jura where every village has at least one colony.

Pictured: *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, one of the species found in our region.

For example, cities often rely on the drinking water from nearby water catchment areas, which include wetlands, mountains and forests. These protective wetlands and woodlands are often under pressure from the cities themselves due to expansion, the cutting of trees for building materials and cooking, and so forth. This urban-rural link is most important.

From problem to solution

As much as cities are part of the problem, they are also part of the solution. There is a clear need to involve cities, and especially developing country megacities, in creating policies and action plans to address important environmental issues. Cities are often vital to realizing environmental policies agreed at the national, regional and global levels.

For example, national governments are working through UNEP's Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities to protect regional seas from land-based pollution. As coastal cities are often a major source of sewage pollution, these cities are asked to develop programmes to reduce sewage dumping into the seas.

Fortunately, win-win situations often exist: addressing environmental issues within cities improves the lives of urban dwellers and at the same time contributes to addressing global or regional environmental issues. A good example is climate change. At present,

most of humanity's carbon dioxide emissions originate from cities. Therefore, global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions need to include cities. But local and global concerns can be combined, as addressing local air pollution can also reduce CO2 emissions.

More broadly, cities will have to play a key role over the next few years in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is no exaggeration to say that, in many ways, the battle for sustainable development and the success of these Goals will be won or lost in our cities.

World Environment Day themes

This year's World Environment Day celebrations, which will take place in the US city of San Francisco from 1 to 5 June, will focus on five themes:

Day 1. Pure Elements – Food, Water, Air

Day 2. Redesigning the metropolis – Recycling, Green Building, Smart Growth

Day 3. Cities On the Move – Transportation

Day 4. Urban Power – Energy, Renewables and Energy Conservation

Day 5. Flower Power- Open Spaces, Biodiversity and Greening the Urban Environment



In addition, the city of San Francisco and UNEP will be promoting a set of Urban Accords for mayors to sign up to and commit themselves to taking action on improving the urban environment. More information can be found at

www.wed2005.org



Managing wildlife trade and conservation: CITES at 30

By Willem Wijnstekers, Secretary General, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Two years after its adoption in Washington DC, CITES entered into force in 1975 with a challenging mission: to ensure that the international trade in thousands of plant and animal species is sustainable and does not lead to population declines or extinction. As CITES celebrates 30 years of action on 1 July, it has proven itself to be up to the task. But in today's rapidly changing world, CITES will need to continue evolving in order to adapt to 21st century needs and maintain its dynamism over the next 30 years.

Thousands of wildlife species are endangered as a result of human activities such as habitat destruction, poaching, over-harvesting and pollution. CITES addresses the threat posed by just one of these activities: international trade. The various threats to wildlife have continued to grow over the past three decades as expanding human populations, development, poverty and war have tested the ability of animals and plants to survive.

International trade has also placed more and more pressure on many species. The greater demand resulting from higher levels of income, travel and tourism has contributed to this growth, as has the role of wildlife in conspicuous consumption (think of caviar and the exotic pet trade). The illegal wildlife trade has expanded and increasingly involved organized criminal networks.

Achievements 1975–2005

CITES has grown and matured over its 30-year lifetime. Its appendices, which list species that may not be commercially traded as well as species whose trade is subject to permits and often quotas, remain dynamic. However, their overall size has more or less stabilized as species are both added and removed at each of our tri-annual conferences. CITES's rules and procedures have developed into a coherent and well-established system for promoting non-detrimental wildlife trade and conservation.

Very importantly, CITES has learned to balance conservation and sustainable use, emphasizing different strategies for different situations. It increasingly seeks to make conservation and poverty reduction mutually supportive. And it provides support to national conservation and enforcement departments in developing countries to ensure that national and international efforts work in tandem.

In addition to preventing more species from becoming threatened, CITES has demonstrated its effectiveness in helping species that are already endangered to return from the brink. Examples of crises transformed into success stories include the South American vicuña and the Nile crocodile, two species whose survival was assured when CITES transformed their wool and skins, respectively, into valuable and sustainably managed com-

modities of benefit to local communities.

Thanks to such efforts, new emergency listings of species have been becoming increasingly rare. What's more, no CITES-listed species has gone extinct due to trade.

By proving itself to be an effective and robust tool for promoting both non-detrimental trade and conservation, CITES has attracted close to 170 Parties. More and more non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also actively engaged with CITES, as demonstrated by rising numbers of participants at our conferences. Evolving from a club-like atmosphere back in the 1970s, CITES has become a sophisticated operation and its conferences are now major global events.

More recently, CITES' effectiveness in managing "traditional" wildlife issues has convinced governments to

NatureNotes

Bats are important to ecosystems around the world. Their role in seed dispersal and pollination is essential for tropical rain forests and many valuable crops. Bats control populations of night-flying insects, and large colonies catch tonnes every night. Without bats, our local farmers and foresters would have a huge and expensive job to control destructive beetles and moths.



The noctule bat *Nyctalus noctula* is one of the largest in Europe. These bats like pastures, wetlands, woods and large gardens where they hunt for moths, beetles and other large flying insects while displaying rapid aerial acrobatics.



expand its role in promoting sustainable development. Species from the high-value fisheries and timber industries, which were originally considered off-limits to the Convention, are now featured on the CITES appendices. I expect this trend to continue.

Remaining effective

To build on these successes as it enters its fourth decade, CITES needs to be more effective in competing for resources and attention. The arrival on the scene of new environmental conventions and organizations has led to greater competition for the available pot of money. Governments want and expect more from CITES, and they recognize its competence and its value. Unfortunately, they are not always prepared to support it with the financial resources needed at either the national or international levels.

As a result, CITES faces a severe challenge in boosting national capacities for conserving wildlife and managing sustainable trade. Regulations cannot work without sufficient enforcement. The average forest guard or game warden is not equipped to deal with organized crime, which needs a sophisticated response. In most parts of the world, national police forces have sufficient training, but they have other priorities besides wildlife trade.

Fortunately, other environmental treaties and organizations are not only possible competitors, but also offer opportunities for collaboration and partnership. There clearly is a continuing

NatureNotes

Bats have existed for around 50 million years. There are some 1100 species – a quarter of all known mammal species. Bats live on all continents except Antarctica. Europe has 47 known species, of which about 30 are found in Switzerland.



Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentoni* is found in the countryside near woods and water. In summer it colonizes tunnels, caves, cellars and mines or the underside of bridges.

need for greater synergies amongst these bodies to address the many critical aspects of global biological diversity.

Looking a bit further ahead, there is the potential for many of CITES' efforts to be overtaken by other threats to species, such as climate change and higher levels of pollution and habitat destruction. Apart from pests and domesticated species, few species are experiencing rapidly growing numbers. Unless the principles of sustain-

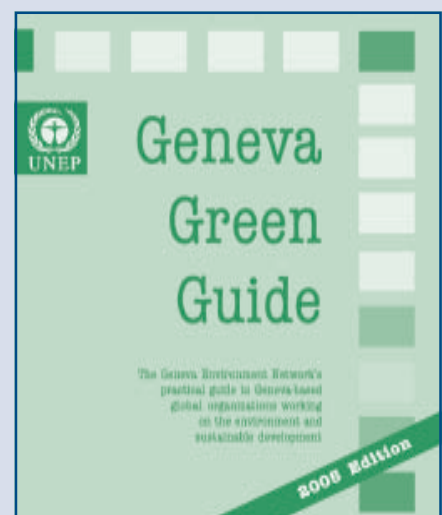
able development become more central to national policy-making, CITES' influence could decline over the next 30 years as wildlife is overwhelmed by larger forces.

This does not have to happen. The history of CITES confirms that it is possible to reconcile the needs of human beings and wildlife. I am confident that CITES will build on its past to make a significant contribution to the 21st century.

Geneva Green Guide, 2005 edition

The Geneva Environment Network's practical guide to Geneva-based organizations working on sustainable development and the global environment has now been fully updated. You may order your complimentary copy of the 2005 edition by sending an email to: gen.secretary@unep.ch, or by writing to us at Geneva Environment Network, International Environment House, 11-13 chemin des Anémones, CH – 1211 Châtelaine, Geneva.

In addition to the republished print version, the Geneva Green Guide can be viewed on-line in a searchable database format at www.environmenthouse.ch/. Users can search the database using a variety of criteria, including a set of keywords, or may view the list of organizations alphabetically. The electronic version of the publication is a living document and is updated regularly.





Countdown 2010: Halting biodiversity loss

By Sebastian Winkler, Senior Policy Officer, IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Over the last few years a number of international agreements have adopted the goal of halting the loss of biodiversity by the year 2010. In political terms, this goal represents a radical departure from previous approaches. For the first time, an overall conservation target has been adopted rather than generally formulated objectives or specific measures that may or may not have the desired conservation effect. Its significance cannot be overstated.

However, given the rapid decline in biodiversity and the ever-increasing extent and intensity of many human activities, the objective of halting the decline in biodiversity by 2010 will require an unprecedented effort to adapt our activities to the needs of natural systems. This effort is needed in rural and natural areas as well as in our urban centers.

Assessing the evidence

As noted by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) released in March, human activities have taken the planet to the edge of a massive wave of species extinctions, further threatening our own well-being. For instance, current rates of loss are estimated at 100 to 1,000 times natural background levels.

The MA's findings are confirmed by the latest statistics from the IUCN Red List of over 15,500 threatened species, which show that 23% of mammals, 12% of birds and 31% of amphibians globally are threatened (see www.redlist.org/info/tables/table1.html).

COUNTDOWN 2010

Halt the loss of biodiversity

Produced by over 1,360 scholars and environmental leaders from 95 countries over four years, the Millennium Assessment puts a special emphasis on how ecosystem services contribute to human well-being. The MA sets out strategies, offers tools and identifies the changes required in institutions and policies to protect biodiversity – the natural capital and foundation for any future human development.

The MA concludes that humanity's future depends on healthy ecosystems. Have you ever considered that the glass of clear, cold, clean water drawn from your faucet may have been purified for you by a wetland or perhaps the root system of an entire forest? If we follow the chain of production for many products back to the source, more often than not we arrive back at biodiversity.

Countdown 2010

To support governments and other stakeholders in achieving the 2010 goal, IUCN initiated Countdown 2010 by launching it by launching it in May

2004 with several NGOs and government stakeholders in Malahide, Ireland. Its chief role is to profile the global 2010 commitments in the EU and pan-European context, and to monitor progress towards implementing these commitments via highly visible actions.

The objectives of the Countdown 2010 initiative are:

- ▶ To encourage and support the full implementation of all existing relevant legislation and international binding commitments:
- ▶ To support the full implementation of all necessary actions, in particular those set out in the Message from Malahide and the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity; and
- ▶ To clearly demonstrate when the time comes to what degree the 2010 commitments have actually been achieved.

Biodiversity and cities

Given the "Green Cities" theme of this year's World Environment Day, it is worth noting that the Province of Noord-Brabant in The Netherlands has become the first Countdown 2010 region in Europe. Noord-Brabant's courageous step is a needed bridge between the global commitments and their practical implementation at the local and regional level. It embodies the philosophy of thinking globally and acting locally.

Noord-Brabant is highly urban and industrialized. Its agriculture, nature

NatureNotes

Early in the 20th century bats were still widespread, but in the last few decades bat populations have been declining at alarming rates worldwide. Almost half of all bats are considered threatened or near-threatened, and there are nearly 400 species on the 2004 IUCN Red List.

<http://www.redlist.org/>

One of the most endangered of Swiss bats is the strange-looking greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*. The growth on its nose is used when it emits ultrasonic squeaks which bounce off prey – mainly large insects – and the echoes are picked up by their large ears.





and landscape have altered dramatically over the past few decades as a result of human activities. Pressure on available space is tremendous. Some important aspects of nature and some characteristic landscapes have been lost.

But the people of Brabant want to live and work in an attractive environment. Therefore, in 2002 the provincial government mounted a "Nature and landscape crusade" to increase the ecological quality of Brabant over the coming ten years. The objective is to expand natural areas and make them more robust, to increase natural and landscape qualities in both the countryside and in cities, and to improve the quality of water, soil and air. A detailed and comprehensive policy programme has been drawn up, including legislation and financial contributions.

We would like to see more regions and cities adopt Countdown 2010, thus raising more awareness of the 2010 global commitments and illustrating more positive examples of the actions that can be taken to halt the loss of biodiversity.

Simultaneously, several countries in Europe are taking up national Countdown 2010 initiatives, to increase efforts of halting the loss of biodiversity. Government and non-government actors meet in the national IUCN Committees to discuss road maps towards 2010.

For more information see:

www.countdown2010.net

NatureNotes

Support bat conservation

Europe has a large number of local and national organizations dealing with the conservation of bats and their habitats, and there is a Europe-wide agreement The Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats:



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www.eurobats.org/

Be sure to visit the website of the Swiss Bat Centre of Geneva's Natural History Museum, and take the family to visit its bat walk in Saint-Ursanne in the Jura.

www.ville-ge.ch/musinfo/mhng/cco/

The zoo at La Garenne in Le Vaud has a hospital for injured bats. If you find one, don't pick it up, but call them for instructions: 41 (0) 22 366 11 14 or visit

www.lagarenne.ch/

Other links:

Bat Conservation International

www.bats.org

The Bat Conservation Trust

www.bats.org.uk/

Geneva hosts its fourth Sustainable Development Fair

For the fourth year running, the City of Geneva, the Canton of Geneva and the United Nations Environment Programme are organizing a Sustainable Development Fair, which will take place from 11-12 June at Geneva's Plaine de Plainpalais. This event will provide information to the general public on the environmental, social and economic impacts of the everyday activities of individuals. This year's theme is sustainable development in the home, and the Fair will highlight concrete action we can all take on a daily basis.



Dates and times:	Opening	Close of stands	End of shows
Saturday 11 June 2005	11h30	20h30	23h30
Sunday 12 June 2005	10h00	19h00	19h00

For more information, see the following websites: **www.geneve.ch/agenda21/**
www.ville-ge.ch/agenda21/
www.environmenthouse.ch



Recent GEN roundtables – tsunamis, water and compliance

In the months since the 26 December Indian Ocean tsunami, environmental organizations have been evaluating the disaster's impact and setting priorities for environment-friendly reconstruction. The Geneva Environment Network organized a roundtable on 15 March that brought together representatives from UNEP, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), WWF International and the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) to share their experiences.

UNEP and others began supporting rapid environmental impact assessments by national authorities within days of the tsunami. They successfully fought to get environmental issues on the agenda as soon as possible.

For example, WWF International's "Timber for Aceh" program is promoting green reconstruction in Indonesia's hardest-hit province. Four to eight million cubic meters of timber are needed for reconstruction, but Indonesia's forests are already over-harvested. The program hopes to import responsibly produced timber for reconstruction.

For the panelists, the tsunami was more than a tragedy: it also created opportunities for positive change. There is an opportunity now to improve on pre-tsunami conditions, for example by using better building materials and investing in less-polluting infrastructure.

The tsunami also inspired greater interaction between environmental and humanitarian organizations. For a few weeks after the disaster, environmental groups in the region provided essential humanitarian relief. And as a result of the disaster, humanitarian organizations are expressing new interest in projects such as early warning systems.

A 20 April roundtable explored the challenge of ensuring that governments remain in compliance with their legal obligations under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Panel members and the chair were drawn from the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation, and access to justice, the Conven-

tion on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape, the University of Geneva and UNEP.

Many environmental treaties have established – or are in the process of developing – binding "compliance mechanisms." The large number of MEAs in existence (more than 500, by some accounts), can make it difficult for states to comply, or even to detect whether they are in full compliance with all of their commitments. UNEP's forthcoming guidance manual for implementation and compliance with environmental treaties will help with that task, using practical examples and general checklists to help national officials.

The term "compliance mechanisms" is gaining wider use than "non-compliance mechanisms" in order to deemphasize sanctions and emphasize assistance. Many states are tiring of the denunciation approach used in human rights. Because all countries share responsibility for environmental protection, countries with good environment records have a responsibility to help countries that acknowledge their noncompliance.

A 22 March roundtable served as the Geneva launch of the UN "Water for Life" Decade. The Decade for Action,

2005-2015, is intended to improve awareness of water-related issues, with a focus on women as managers of water.

The "Water for Life" campaign seeks to promote the Millennium Goal of halving the proportion of people without safe drinking water by 2015. But the roundtable panelists – drawn from the Ramsar Convention, the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape, Wetlands International and the World Health Organization – stressed that good management of water resources is also essential to fulfilling many other goals, such as improving education and reducing poverty.

Environmental organizations are increasingly aware that poverty and environmental degradation are inter-related. Poverty reduction depends on addressing environmental issues that matter to poor people, and addressing poverty is critical to sustaining wetlands in developing countries. Degraded natural resources restrict food, housing, and livelihood opportunities in poor communities, leading to overexploitation of resources – a vicious poverty trap.

Climate change will further complicate the water issue in the decades to come.

S-DEV 2005

S-DEV Geneva is a new and major annual event that will present future action-orientated solutions in the field of sustainable development.

The first such event – S-DEV 2005 – will take place from 11-13 October 2005, at GENEVA PALEXPO in Geneva, Switzerland, and will address sustainable urban development.

It will include a high-level conference, a lively exhibition and interactive workshops. Stakeholders from the North and South, private and public sectors and 24 cities from around the world will join forces to present, showcase and debate the next generation of solutions to solve urban issues.

For more information see

www.s-dev.org





Upcoming environment-related events in the Geneva area

Date	Organizer/event/contact
3 June	World Environment Day Roundtable on "Greening Europe's Cities" at the International Environment House, Geneva. GEN/UNEP, Tel: +41 22 917 8326 www.environmenthouse.ch
6-10 June	Ramsar Standing Committee, 31st meeting, Gland, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 999 0170, ramsar@ramsar.org , www.ramsar.org
14-17 June	WTO Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Tel: +41 22 739 5007, enquiries@wto.org , www.wto.org
16-17 June	WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade. Tel: +41 22 739 5007, enquiries@wto.org , www.wto.org
27 June-1 July	UNECE 14th Committee on Sustainable Energy. Tel: +4122 917 4444, info.energy@unece.org , www.unece.org/ie/se/com.html
27 June-1 July	53rd meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, Tel: +41 22 9178 139, cites@unep.ch , www.cites.ch
29 June	UNECE Roundtable on the Kyoto Protocol, energy efficiency and climate change mitigation: Committee on Sustainable Energy and Energy Efficiency 21, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, info.energy@unece.org , www.unece.org/ie/se/eneffic.html
29-30 June	WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Tel: +41 22 739 5007, enquiries@wto.org , www.wto.org
4-8 July	4th Session of the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention. Tel: +41 22 917 218, sbc@unep.ch , www.basel.ch
31 Aug-2 Sept	UNECE Working group on effects: Convention on Long range Transboundary Air Pollution. Tel: +41 22 917 2370, air.env@unece.org , www.unece.org/env/lrtap
1-2 September	UNECE Working group on environmental monitoring and assessment, Committee on Environmental Policy. Tel: +41 22 917 0107, monitoring.wgem@unece.org ; www.unece.org/env/europe/monitoring
5-7 September	UNECE Steering body to the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP): Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution. Tel: +41 22 917 2370, air.env@unece.org , www.unece.org/env/lrtap
16 September	WTO Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Tel: +41 22 739 5007, enquiries@wto.org , www.wto.org
10-12 October	UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. Tel: +41 22 917 0107, info.enhs@unece.org , www.unece.org/env/cep
11-13 October	"S-DEV Geneva 05" Conference/Exhibition: International Platform on Sustainable Urban Development, Geneva Palexpo. Tel: +41 31 311 3566, info@s-dev.org , www.s-dev.org

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This newsletter includes information contributed by Geneva-area organizations. It provides general information only and does not represent the official views of these organizations nor of the United Nations.

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