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## Workshop Announcement

### Cities, Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Nairobi, 21 September 2006

Side Event at the Africities Summit (18-24 September 2006)

#### Background

Although cities occupy just 2 percent of the Earth's surface, their inhabitants use 75% of the planet's natural resources. Cities draw on their surrounding ecosystems for goods and services, and their products and emissions can affect regional and even global ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems and biological diversity are vital for cities to function properly. For example, the city of Nairobi draws its drinking water from the Aberdares National Park some 200 km away.

Cities also play a key role in global efforts to protect and manage vulnerable ecosystems and biodiversity such as green areas within the cities, urban parks, forests, wetlands and watersheds in the surrounding areas. For example, the capital of Ghana, Accra, borders on wetlands which used to perform important ecosystem functions such as drainage of rainwater run-off, fishing, and water cleansing. However, the wetlands have become so polluted and clogged from human activity that they have lost these functions with disastrous effects to groundwater quality and health of the city dwellers.

Just as the ecological footprint of a city can have a negative impact far beyond the boundaries of the city, certain urban actions can also have a far-reaching positive impact. New York City, for example, decided to buy and preserve woodlands outside the city boundaries so that it could serve as a water catchment area and deliver clean water to the city. This came much cheaper to the city authorities than bringing the water from far and having to use end-of-pipe technology to clean it.

#### Objective

The objective of this workshop is to highlight the linkages between cities, ecosystems and biodiversity at the local and global levels. Local authorities should be made aware of the multiple benefits of appropriate ecosystem management. Measures to preserve biodiversity often have other positive impacts on the environment. These include for example: securing a city's livelihood base by preserving water catchment areas and land for agricultural production; improving the quality of life for urban residents by preserving recreational facilities; improving the health of urban residents by improving air and water quality; avoiding a heat island effect; preserving carbon sinks (forests, urban parks) and reducing the effects of climate change; achieving savings for the city budget by saving energy and avoiding costly end-of-pipe technologies.

The workshop will also address the belief that preserving biodiversity is a luxury which cannot be afforded as long as there are vast numbers of poor urban dwellers. It will show how the poor can benefit from ecosystems and biodiversity conservation. Finally, the meeting will offer practical advice on how to manage urban protected areas.

#### Outcomes and Outputs

- Exchange of experience between cities
- Network of African cities on cities, ecosystems and biodiversity
- Guidelines on how to improve linkage between cities and biodiversity
- List of successful tools and methods

- Best practices on the relationship between urban protected areas and cities (input to case studies to be published by ICLEI/UNEP and to Handbook on Managing Urban and Peri-urban Conservation Issues to be published by IUCN Task Force)

**Target Group**

- Partner cities of the IUCN “Cities in Nature, Nature in Cities” Programme, ICLEI, and the UN-HABITAT/UNEP Sustainable Cities Programme
- African city representatives participating in the Africities Summit
- Kenyan park managers and local authorities
- NGOs