

Global Forum on Human Settlements Marco Lambertini speech

Dear colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for this invitation. I am truly pleased to be part of this timely discussion.

Let me start by stressing that the evidence of our impact on the natural world has never been clearer, and so the impact of the climate and biodiversity crisis not just on the natural world, but also on our lives, economies, health and well-being.

In line with the growing and irrefutable evidence, we have also witnessed a growing societal recognition of the urgent need to reverse the degradation of the natural world. This movement is now shaping into a true cultural revolution, an “eco-awakening”, after centuries of taking nature for granted. And cities can attest to that.

The loss of nature has become, not only an ecological issue, but also an economic and development issue, a social justice and human rights issue, with most vulnerable populations being affected the most. It is clear that unless we stabilize climate change and reverse the loss of ecosystems and natural resources, not only we won't be able to achieve critical 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in addressing hunger, malnutrition, extreme poverty, but in fact we may even undermine progress made so far.

A growing number of governments, environmental, humanitarian, development, and also business, finance and cities coalitions are increasingly demanding a Global Goal for Nature, similar to the one that we have for climate agreed in Paris.

On climate we are crystal clear: must achieve net zero emissions by 2050. This has sent a clear signal to the markets and disrupted the energy sector driving innovation and investments, changes in lifestyle and consumption behaviors away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy. We know we are not moving yet as fast as needed, but the direction is clear and the transition has started.

On nature we don't have the same clarity and this is affecting our ability to act at scale to reverse the precipitous loss of nature. We need a clear global goal for nature to drive financial flows towards supporting nature-positive transitions in the economic sectors responsible for nature loss. Top of the list agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining and infrastructure.

A Global goal for nature ambitious and science based like the climate one. Carbon neutral by 2050 for climate...Nature positive by 2030 as global goal for nature ..., Net zero emissions and net-positive biodiversity because we should not protect the nature left on the planet but restore much of what we have lost.

Nature positive by 2030, so that by the end of the decade we commit to have more nature than we have today. Not less. More forests, more fish in oceans and rivers, more pollinators in our country side, more biodiversity worldwide, including in cities.

I am heartened by the various initiatives of the past two years – the Edinburgh Declaration on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the C40 Urban Nature Declaration, the Cities4Forests Call to Action on Forests and Climate; not to mention city supporters of the Leaders Pledge for Nature, and the Non-State Actors' Call for Action to strengthen the Global Biodiversity Framework.

This shows that cities are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of nature to them and of their importance to nature.

As population, consumption and solution hubs, cities are a huge part of the solution. Cities, and the way we live in them, contribute today to climate change and the global loss of biodiversity. But it doesn't have to be that way. Cities can instead play a powerful role in reducing humanity's environmental impact as they can meet human needs more efficiently. By becoming carbon neutral and nature positive cities.

We also know that Cities need nature to be healthy and livable – cleaning the air and water, adapting to climate change by reducing temperature extremes and reducing the impact of floods (the sponge cities), encouraging people to be outdoors, stimulating walking and cycling, which have profound impacts on people's physical and mental health, and social resilience.

Today, this is more important than ever. On one hand the climate and nature crises are deepening, heading towards catastrophic tipping points. On the other hand science has never been clearer and awareness has never been greater. Commitments and actions are multiplying. But this is not enough. We need a plan. A plan fit for purpose to deliver on both the carbon neutral and nature positive goals.

We need a shared plan that unites governments, businesses, investors and consumers, and the Climate COP26, Biodiversity COP15, Land Degradation COP 15 and the Ocean summit all scheduled in the next 8 months present an unmissable window of opportunity to build an ambitious and integrated agenda for action.

Cities, regions and other stakeholders from all corners of society must be included in key decisions, as they have a critical role to play in delivering ambitious climate and biodiversity outcomes.

This time it has to be different, this time it feels different. Together we can secure a transformative change to an equitable, carbon neutral and nature-positive world for all.

In the next eight months in 2021 and 2022, we have a momentous opportunity to change the course on climate and nature loss, stabilizing climate and restoring the loss of nature as the foundation for a safer and more equitable future, a better future for all, in fact the only possible future for humanity.