

Agenda Item	4
Report No	CCC/01/22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Climate Change Committee

Date: 3 November 2022

Report Title: Edinburgh Declaration

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This Report introduces the Edinburgh Declaration (**Appendix 1**). The Edinburgh Declaration sets out the aspirations and commitments of the members of the international community, the Scottish Government, Edinburgh Process Partners (**Appendix 2**), and the wider subnational constituency of the Convention on Biological Diversity¹ (CBD) in delivering for nature over the coming decade.
- 1.2 In recognition of the key role that subnational governments and Local Authorities play in delivering biodiversity protection the Edinburgh Declaration is open for signing by parties working at the local level.
- 1.3 By signing the Edinburgh Declaration, the Council will be acknowledging the importance of biodiversity and that it is committed to tackling biodiversity loss, both in its own right and as part of the reinforcing twin climate and ecological crisis. This aligns with the Council's own declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency.
- 1.4 This report recommends that the Council agree to becoming a signatory of the Edinburgh Declaration and that the Council Leader and Chief Executive formally sign the Declaration.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **Agree** that Highland Council sign the Edinburgh Declaration.

¹ [Convention on Biological Diversity and post 2020 global biodiversity framework](#)

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – Becoming a signatory of the Edinburgh Declaration has no direct resource implications. It is, however, likely that additional resources will be necessary in due course to deliver the range of mitigating actions outlined therein. It is notable that the Edinburgh Process is already being reflected in draft Scottish Government policy (including NPF4 and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy). Consequently, any direct resource implications would result from these policy changes rather than from signing the Declaration.
- 3.2 **Legal** – The Edinburgh Declaration does not include any legally binding commitments and as such there are no formal legal implications; it is a statement of intent/support to safeguard biodiversity and halt biodiversity loss.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – The Edinburgh Process and Edinburgh Declaration emphasise the importance of local representation and involvement in issues that affect local communities and governments.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – Scotland is facing a twin reinforcing crises of climate change and biodiversity loss: a decline in biodiversity will exacerbate the climate crisis, and a changing climate will accelerate the rate of biodiversity loss. By signing the Edinburgh Declaration the Council will be signally its commitment to tackling biodiversity loss and ensuring the continued provision of nature’s services on which we all depend, as well as to delivering net zero targets and tackling and adapting to a changing climate in accordance with the Council’s on declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency.
- 3.5 **Risk** – Signing the Edinburgh Declaration poses no risks for the Council. The Declaration reinforces an existing Council commitment to tackle the nature crisis and biodiversity loss, albeit on a national and international stage. By not signing the Declaration the Council could be perceived as not giving the issue the importance that it warrants.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – No formal Gaelic implications but if the Council is minded to sign we will explore whether there is an opportunity for Gaelic to be incorporated in the official paperwork.

4 Background

- 4.1 On behalf of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Scottish Government has led a global partnership in the ‘Edinburgh Process’ – Consultation with sub-national governments, including regional, city and local authorities on their role in the post 2020 global biodiversity targets. A key output of the Edinburgh Process is the Edinburgh Declaration, which demonstrates the commitment, and recognises the vital role, of subnational authorities, cities and local authorities across the world in working to deliver for nature over the next decade. In order to achieve truly transformational change for nature, all levels of government and society must work more effectively together.

- 4.2 The Edinburgh Declaration largely aligns with the Council's own 2019 declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency. The Declaration presents an opportunity to engage and give political support to international collaboration on the global threat of biodiversity loss, thereby increasing visibility of Scottish Local Government's commitment to climate change and demonstrating solidarity with the global community of local authorities working for sustainable development. In light of the Council's position on climate change and biodiversity, it would seem logical for the Council to become a signatory.
- 4.3 Both the Scottish Government and NatureScot are encouraging Scottish local authorities to sign the declaration in a public show of commitment to address the biodiversity crisis and tackle biodiversity loss. By signing the Declaration, Highland Council would be making a clear statement that we want the Highlands to be a flourishing, healthy, nature-rich place to live and work.

5 Existing Signatories

- 5.1 The Scottish Government considers the Declaration as a tool to highlight to state parties the level of ambition and activity already present at a local level, and make the case for increased involvement of subnational, regional and local actors in relation to their national counterparts. Aberdeenshire Council became the first Scottish Council to sign the Declaration in November 2020 and were soon followed by several other local authorities. To date 13 Scottish local authorities plus the two National Park authorities have become signatories.
- 5.2 In addition to the local authorities and national parks, other high-profile Scottish signatories include NatureScot, the Scottish Land Commission, CoSLA and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive of the Council are invited to sign the Edinburgh Declaration.
- 6.2 If Members are minded to sign the Declaration, officers will explore opportunities for a promotional event, with NatureScot and/or Scottish Government, to highlight this commitment.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 2 September 2022

Authors: Nathan McLaughlan, Biodiversity Partnership Officer

Background Papers: [Edinburgh Declaration - NatureScot Guidance](#)

Appendix 1

EDINBURGH DECLARATION

For subnational governments, cities and local authorities on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

31 August 2020

Preamble

We, subnational governments, cities and local authorities - as participants and contributors to the *Edinburgh Process for Subnational and Local Governments on the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework*, and supported by the Secretariat and some Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity - are **deeply concerned** about the significant implications that the loss of biodiversity and climate change has on our livelihood and communities. The impacts on our environment, infrastructure, economy, health and wellbeing, and our enjoyment of nature are already visible. Indeed, the COVID-19 global pandemic has reminded us how important it is to live in harmony with nature. Healthy biodiversity and the ecosystem services that it provides are key for human well-being and to build the resilience of our cities and regions, both during and after the pandemic, and it should be central to our recovery.

We **are concerned** that, as outlined in the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, none of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets have been fully met; that action by CBD Parties alone is insufficient to put us on a path to the 2050 vision of 'living in harmony with nature' or to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and that convergence across multilateral environment agreements (MEA's) is progressing at too slow a pace.

We **acknowledge** that the IPBES *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* concludes that, despite insufficient action, it is not too late for the climate or for biodiversity, but that transformative action is needed at all levels.

We **recognise** the need for transformative change across terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and across urban development and all productive sectors to ensure enhanced food security, human health and sustainable livelihoods whilst avoiding, mitigating or minimising the negative impact on biodiversity. We also **recognise** the role that many indigenous peoples and local communities have in the management of their territories, through effective biodiversity mainstreaming across all sectors.

We **note** the need to develop effective policy, governance and financing solutions at all levels of government and to ensure vertical integration across national, subnational, city and local levels to effect transformative change. These should address both the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, and integrate all dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic, cultural and social).

We **also note** the vital role that indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth, non-governmental organisations, and wider society, play in decision

making and in taking action at subnational, city and local levels, and that there should be a fully collaborative approach to ensure active participation of these groups.

We **highlight** the key role of the private sector, including the financial sector, and **encourage** them to catalyse the transformative change needed through full, active and responsible engagement, in support of biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable use.

We **emphasise** the key role that subnational governments, cities and local authorities already play in protecting and enhancing biodiversity and in delivering actions across planning, implementation, and monitoring.

We **welcome** the endorsement of the *Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities, and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020)* under Decision X/22 and **recognise** the productive role that this has played in the last decade mobilising subnational, city and local authority actions towards implementing the goals of the Convention; and in fostering an increased recognition on the critical role of our constituency in the CBD.

We **celebrate** the commitments and statements already issued by subnational governments, cities and local authorities including recent declarations of intent¹², and in particular the results achieved through the outputs of the 5th and 6th Global Biodiversity Summit of Cities and Subnational Governments – the *Quintana Roo Communique on Mainstreaming Local and Subnational Biodiversity* (2016) and the *Sharm El-Sheikh Communique for Local and Subnational Action for Nature and People* (2018).

We **acknowledge** the need to build upon the existing *Plan of Action* under Decision X/22, and the advocacy agenda of subnational governments, cities and local authorities over the past decade, and **collectively commit** to raising our ambition and action in the coming decade.

Development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

We **welcome** the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, in particular clear, action based, SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) targets and the inclusion of an integrated monitoring framework.

We **thank** the Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework for taking an inclusive and participatory approach in developing the framework; and **welcome** the ‘whole of government’ approach embodied in the framework, which captures the principle of governance across all levels of government, including at the level of subnational governments, cities and local authorities.

¹ [Aburra Valley – Medellin Declaration of Metropolitan Areas to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework \(2019\)](#)

² [Carta de São Paulo - BIO2020 – Brazilian Perspectives for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework \(2020\)](#)

We continue to **support** the 2050 vision “*living in harmony with nature*” and stand ready with a raised ambition to make a contribution that will deliver a local to global impact, and meaningfully contribute to the long term goals.

We **share the ambition** of the 2030 Mission as was set out in the Zero Draft version of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, ‘*To take urgent action across society to put biodiversity on a path to recovery for the benefit of the planet and people.*’ This ensures a clear pathway towards the 2050 Vision and corresponds with the ambition of subnational governments, cities and local authorities towards addressing the most pressing global challenges, including climate change, disaster risk reduction, health and poverty alleviation, as well as biodiversity.

Implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

We **welcome** the inclusion of subnational governments, cities and local authorities, as key enablers for the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. However, we **recognise** that our role extends beyond the provision of enabling conditions.

Subnational governments, cities and local authorities play key roles in conserving, restoring and reducing threats to biodiversity, in meeting people’s needs through sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing, in developing the tools and solutions needed for implementing biodiversity protection actions, and in monitoring and reporting.

We **recognise** that our actions in implementing and mainstreaming biodiversity ensure that support mechanisms and enabling conditions are in place at subnational, city and local levels - and that a vertically integrated and cross-cutting governance approach would enhance these efforts.

We **highlight** the significant role that subnational governments, cities and local authorities play in resource mobilisation for implementation and mainstreaming of biodiversity actions. We **stress** the need for immediate and increased efforts to mobilise financial resources at all levels of government and from the private sector.

We are uniquely and most effectively positioned to deliver the outreach, awareness, and uptake of the framework across the whole of society, facilitating engagement with key stakeholders to implement the framework at subnational, city and local levels. Nevertheless, we **recognise** that more can be done to build upon already existing policies and frameworks to ensure the full participation of the whole of society in delivering the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

COMMITMENT FOR THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Subnational governments, cities and local authorities will continue to build upon our previous efforts, to deliver transformative actions by:

- Recognising the overall value of nature and integrating it into subnational, city and local planning, management and governance instruments;

- Implementing appropriate actions that deliver on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework goals and action targets;
- Aligning biodiversity strategies and actions, and our monitoring and reporting efforts with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), within our subnational, city and local competencies;
- Increasing resource mobilisation for investment in biodiversity action at subnational, city and local levels, and providing incentives to ensure positive outcomes;
- Mainstreaming biodiversity across public, private and business sectors to achieve greater environmental, societal and economic resilience;
- Communicating, educating and raising public awareness with specific efforts to make knowledge available in several languages;
- Strengthening capacity building in order to implement nature-based solutions (NBS) and green and blue infrastructure, particularly through ecosystem based approaches and as a contribution to a green recovery from COVID-19;
- Providing opportunities for knowledge exchange across subnational, city and local levels, and between all sectors of society;
- Sharing best practices across subnational, city and local levels, to efficiently implement transformative actions;
- Delivering convergence with other intergovernmental agreements and processes, taking forward bold and innovative actions at the subnational, city and local level which result in mutually beneficial outcomes.

CALL FOR ACTION

We subnational governments, cities and local authorities therefore **call upon** Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to:

- I. Take strong and bold actions to bring about transformative change, as outlined in the IPBES global assessment report, in order to halt biodiversity loss.
- II. Recognise the vital role of subnational governments, cities and local authorities, in delivering the 2050 vision of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the 2030 mission as set out in the Zero Draft document; and to explicitly place that recognition throughout the framework text, including the monitoring framework for the goals and targets.
- III. Support the adoption at COP15, of a new dedicated Decision for the greater inclusion of subnational governments, cities and local authorities within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework; that builds upon and renews the *Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020)* as endorsed *under* Decision X/22; and that significantly raises ambition for subnational, city and local implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework throughout the next decade.
- IV. Establish a multi-stakeholder platform that ensures representation of subnational governments, cities and local authorities to support the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

We, subnational governments, cities and local authorities, ***stand ready*** to meet the challenge of delivering, alongside Parties, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, to ensure investment, and play a stronger role in the implementation of the framework through a renewed and significantly stepped-up *Plan of Action for subnational governments, cities and local authorities* for the coming decade.

Appendix 2

Edinburgh Process Partners

- Scottish Government
- Welsh Government
- ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
- ICLEI Europe
- Regions for Sustainable Development
- Government of Quebec
- Group of Leading Subnational Governments toward the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (GoLS)
- European Committee of the Regions

Supported by:

- NatureScot
- Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh