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The Salzburg Statement on the Child in the City *Health, Parks and Play*

A CALL TO ACTION

The *Promise of Sydney* affirms that “nature is the ultimate foundation of life, our economy and our aspirations, and underpins our human existence, cultural identity, health and prosperity.” It positions protected and conserved areas – including urban green space – as critical investments for climate resilience and human wellbeing.

In 2009, for the first time ever, the world’s population became more urban than rural. By 2050, around two-thirds of all people will live in cities and urban populations will grow by more than 2 billion people.

Too often, cities value and invest in the built environment and pay little attention to our need for, and dependence on, nature. This has enormous health and environmental risks, particularly for young children.

Many cities are not child-friendly and do not prioritize children’s needs. There is an urgent need to create cities that sustain and enhance the lives of children, prioritizing their health and mental, physical and social-emotional development. All children should have the “right to a safe and healthy city”* where they can safely play, explore, and experience nature and the outdoors. These are fundamentals for lifelong health and wellbeing.

In 2017, 52 experts in urban planning, childhood development, conservation, environmental policy, and health gathered for the Parks for the Planet Forum’s meeting on *The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play*, to assess the evidence and accelerate action for nature and health to benefit children in a rapidly urbanizing world.

All children should be able to benefit from nature – wherever they live, learn and play. Inspired by *The Promise of Sydney*, the participants at the Parks for the Planet Forum convened by Salzburg Global Seminar and IUCN propose a new agenda to prioritize children’s needs for their optimal health and development.

People across the world share a responsibility to create livable cities that enhance children’s wellbeing and integrate nature. We have great opportunities to set a new course within continuing urbanization trends to create a healthy future for all children and our planet – provided that we act quickly together. Comprehensive actions can expand the role nature plays in children’s health, learning and development, and lay foundations for resilient communities in nature-rich cities. Outdoor play is a social activity where children learn how to get along with other children and in doing so they learn about citizenship.

We therefore call on leaders and stakeholders to ensure that all children enjoy the right to safe, free play in a nature-rich space within a ten-minute walk of where they live.

To achieve this, we need policies, practices and investments which recognize that:

- Cities depend on surrounding landscapes and protected areas to provide critical ecosystem services for inhabitants, like clean air, clean water, and biodiversity.
- Nature experiences provide benefits for physical and mental health and wellbeing at all ages.
- Nature experiences promote children’s short and long-term cognitive and physical development.
- Nature experiences teach children to respect, care for, and become stewards of the natural world.
- Personalizing nature through culture, stories, and art can build and support identity, pride of place, family and community wellbeing, and social cohesion.
- Parks, playgrounds and public green spaces play a crucial role in healthy and inclusive cities, providing ready access to nature and also serving as urban gateways to wider nature experiences and neighboring protected areas.
- Nature-based solutions are cost-effective, high return investments that provide direct benefits for public health and education, improve living conditions, and build resilience to climate and environmental change.

A full list of recommendations is included overleaf.



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The **Parks for the Planet Forum** is a collaborative platform for transformative leadership and action, launched by Salzburg Global Seminar and IUCN in 2015. The Forum combines an annual high level meeting for catalytic leadership, investment and innovation with an evolving multi-year work program to share pioneering approaches at local and international level. It aims to position nature at the very heart of human health and wellbeing, security and prosperity across the planet. The 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress explicitly endorsed the *Salzburg Challenge on Nature, Health and a New Urban Generation*, which was adopted by participants at the Forum's first meeting in November 2015.

The Salzburg Statement will be accompanied by a full session report. For more information, see: www.salzburgglobal.org/go/574

Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1947, with the mission to challenge present and future leaders to solve issues of global concern: www.SalzburgGlobal.org

IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature, founded in 1948, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges: www.iucn.org

The views expressed in this statement reflect consensus among participants and should not be taken to represent those of all participants or of any organization with which they are affiliated.

** Consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals.*

Eight actions can transform cities for children:

1. Ensure children of all ages, backgrounds, income, and abilities have equitable access to nature and play regularly and in meaningful ways to promote good health and wellbeing.
2. Embed nature in everyday places used by children, such as schools, backyards, parks, playgrounds and city streets, to make the city into a natural outdoor classroom.
3. Involve children in designing and planning natural spaces for recreation, education, inspiration and health, to give them ownership and pride in their local communities, schools and parks
4. Build curiosity, wonder, and care for nature in children (for example by greening school grounds and involving children with community gardens).
5. Protect natural features across cityscapes and create an equitably distributed network of accessible green and nature-rich spaces that all generations can reach on foot.
6. Connect cities with the broader ecosystems in which they are embedded, creating corridors for people, plants and animals to move safely across the city and into its surroundings.
7. Establish more urban conservation areas to increase access to nature and connect cities to the broader protected area network
8. Work together through cross sectoral and multi-level partnerships to build an inclusive culture of health in cities.