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The Salzburg Challenge for Nature, Health and a New Urban Generation

A CALL TO ACTION

By 2050, over three in four people – at least 6 billion – will live in towns and cities, with the fastest urban growth across Asia and Africa.

Urbanization has many benefits but we see a growing disconnect between people and nature which affects our physical, mental and spiritual health. Given the soaring cost of non-communicable diseases (diabetes, cancers, respiratory and heart disease), depressive disorders and obesity, it is urgent to put human needs for nature, healthy lifestyles and safe outdoor activity at the heart of planning and investments for an urban planet.

The Promise of Sydney is a 10-year road map adopted by 6000 participants from 160 countries at the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014. Affirming 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.

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 inaugural session on *Nature, Health and a New Urban Generation* (November 8 to 11, 2015) was supported by Conservation International, Parks Canada and Korea National Parks Service, in collaboration with ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, World Health Organization (WHO) and World Urban Parks.

Inspired by *The Promise of Sydney*, participants convened by Salzburg Global Seminar and IUCN take up the global challenge and emerging opportunities to connect nature and health for the benefit of new urban generations in more livable cities.

We will catalyze and nurture new ways of working together to secure the right for all people to experience and be excited by nature and gain lifelong benefits for health and wellbeing from outdoor activities in varied and stimulating environments. We will seek to foster new leadership to conserve nature as the foundation for sustainability in an era of rapid global change.

Why act and why now?

We already have enough evidence to lead change as we know that:

- Access to safe natural settings has a positive influence on physical and mental health and wellbeing, increases the likelihood of physical activity, fosters social connections, and reduces stress and illness;
- Direct experiences of nature are the foundation for stewardship and active care for the environment, vital to shape community and protect a resilient and life-sustaining planet now and in the future;
- Investing in urban parks and green infrastructure, and connecting these with surrounding rural areas, helps to reduce air pollution, disaster risk and climate change impacts, improve clean water supplies, and secure co-benefits for health;
- Cities and local governments provide an exceptional opportunity for leadership on sustainability, cooperation across sectors, intergenerational partnerships, mobilization of communities for action on the ground, and measurement of progress.

We call on all sectors and stakeholders to accelerate regional and global action for nature-based solutions to help communities and cities flourish and advance health and dignity for all people.

A full list of recommendations is included overleaf.



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The **Parks for the Planet Forum** is a 10-year initiative embedded in the IUCN Global Protected Areas Programme and convened by Salzburg Global Seminar. The Forum will combine 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 levels. Over the next decade, the Forum aims to position nature at the very heart of human health and wellbeing, security and prosperity across the planet.

The **Salzburg Challenge** will be accompanied by a full report from this session covering all discussions and key recommendations.

More information is available online:
www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/557

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 Challenge reflect consensus among participants and should not be taken to represent the views of all participants or of any organization with which they are affiliated.

What needs to be done?

1. Build a partnership between IUCN, WHO, Stockholm Resilience Centre, ICLEI, World Urban Parks and leading cities, in conjunction with the Salzburg Global Parks for the Planet Forum, to accelerate efforts to increase awareness and use of nature-based solutions in urban development and public health;
2. Collect and share success stories that demonstrate good practices;
3. Make a robust case for investment, using available evidence on the economic benefits of closer coordination between key sectors: health, social care, urban planning, finance and nature conservation;
4. Influence public policy and decision-making at local and regional scales;
5. Create new alliances between public, private and community organizations;
6. Mobilize new audiences and champions, especially young, diverse urban populations;
7. Include health information and experiences of nature throughout education, from early childhood to university and professional programs;
8. Encourage senior urban citizens to share activities and positive attitudes towards health and nature to inspire younger generations;
9. Address mobility and health barriers for vulnerable citizens to access green spaces, with a special focus on the poor and disabled;
10. Promote knowledge exchange and cross-sectoral research between key sectors, in cooperation with conservation and public health agencies, urban policymakers and planners.

Who needs to act?

We, the Fellows of Salzburg Global Seminar, commit to maintaining this momentum through multi-year collaboration. We invite all sectors and stakeholders to combine their efforts to address this Challenge, including but not limited to:

- City mayors, planners and investors;
- Public health agencies and organizations;
- Nature conservation agencies and urban park managers;
- Business and media;
- Research and educational institutions;
- Non-governmental organizations and activists;
- Neighborhood and youth organizations, religious leaders and indigenous communities.