



# IFLA DECLARES A CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY EMERGENCY

Recognizing clear evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Council of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) declares a global climate and biodiversity emergency.

## Why are we declaring an emergency?

On October 10, 2018 IFLA's Working Group on Climate Change issued the following statement in response to the [\*Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C\*](#)<sup>1</sup> by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

*The IPCC Special Report warns that unless significant reductions in emissions are attained before 2030, increases in the mean global temperature will surpass 1.5°C. As we are already experiencing the consequences on natural and human systems as a result of a 1°C temperature increase rapid and far-reaching transitions are required in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport and cities if we are to limit further warming to 1.5°C. The IPCC concluded that society has only 12 years left in which to make these changes to avoid the anticipated and more severe risks predicted of a 2°C change.*

*Landscape architects understand that our greatest contributions to ensuring a prosperous future are vested in the creation of human societies characterized by an enhanced capacity for resilience, a willingness to transform to a better state, and a commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of environments, cultures and well-being. Together with allied planning and design professionals, natural scientists, sociologists and economists, we will continue to advocate for innovative approaches to low carbon community development and management, and for the protection and enhancement of natural systems with emphasis on the integration of the natural environment into human communities through blue/green infrastructure projects and an enhanced urban canopy. We can and must do our part locally, nationally and internationally.*

Today, almost a year later, the earth has continued to experience record breaking global and local temperatures, rapid glacial and arctic sea ice loss, drought and wildfires and repeated extreme weather events. Climate change has already significantly affected the majority of terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems and species.

The IPBES<sup>2</sup> reports that there has already been an unprecedented decline in natural life, with over 1 million species now at growing risk of extinction. Unless transformative changes are made by society, we will continue to erode the foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and the quality of life worldwide.

The IUCN<sup>3</sup> notes that the rate at which global warming and ocean acidification is already happening severely limits the ability of species and ecosystems to adapt, and that if we are to avoid catastrophic biodiversity impacts, urgent action to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, to protect ecosystems, enhance species resilience and maintain natural carbon sinks is needed. Throughout the globe, human communities are increasingly threatened by severe weather events, with growing suffering to individuals and populations and expanding costs to societies and economies.

To date, our response has simply not been enough.

We are inspired by the recent actions of those members who have already made such declarations, who are taking their responsibility seriously to act in the public interest and to safeguard the landscape and the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations – namely the Landscape Institute (LI)<sup>4</sup> and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture (AILA)<sup>5</sup>.

**To this end, the IFLA World Council declares that there is a global climate and biodiversity emergency. This declaration affirms our commitment to a significant, long-term shift in thinking, behavior, policy.**

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## IFLA ClimateACTION! Plan

IFLA represents 77 national associations of landscape architects who have already been at work promoting action to reduce emissions, to protect nature, and to plan for a changed future. In 2017 the IFLA Working Group on Climate Change developed and ratified the *Global Accord – adaptation for a changing world*. Working from the principles embedded in the Accord, the Working Group now proposes a two-year **ClimateACTION! Plan**, to engage and guide the actions of landscape architecture associations and individuals.

The **ClimateACTION! Plan** outlines how we will engage with our members, our partners, our firms, and our colleagues in allied professions and in research and education, to bring about a programme of real change. We understand while this battle must be immediately engaged it will not be won quickly, and will require concerted effort over time to influence change in social behaviour; to protect, enhance and sustain ecosystems; and, to create transformative communities that ensure the well-being of people and nature.

In addition to the **IFLA ClimateACTION! Plan**, IFLA and its Members commit to:

- Advocating at the global level of government and decision-making forums for recognition of the Emergency, action to implement needed changes to policy and practice, and allocation of sufficient resources to respond in a timely and productive manner.
- Working with national associations to update ethical standards and codes of conduct to align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030<sup>6</sup> and environmentally responsible use of resources.
- Partnering with corporate, academic, NGO colleagues in support of IFLA efforts to advocate for immediate action.
- Partnering with suppliers to improve industry standards and practice.
- Reducing our own carbon footprints, through changes in materials, design practice, travel and operations.
- Providing paths to improved understanding and access to training, tools and guidance on emerging science, climate positive design and environment net gain.

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1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C* available at: [www.ipcc.ch/sr15/](http://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/)
  2. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. [www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment](http://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment)
  3. International Union for the Conservation of Nature. [www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/species-and-climate-change](http://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/species-and-climate-change)
  4. Landscape Institute (LI) [www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/climate-change/](http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/climate-change/)
  5. Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture (AILA) [www.aila.org.au/imis\\_prod/AILAWeb/AILA\\_News/2019/Landscape\\_Architects\\_Declare%20Climate\\_and\\_Biodiversity\\_Loss\\_Emergency.aspx?WebsiteKey=44fe2fe0-5560-4283-981a-c15fe691b1d1](http://www.aila.org.au/imis_prod/AILAWeb/AILA_News/2019/Landscape_Architects_Declare%20Climate_and_Biodiversity_Loss_Emergency.aspx?WebsiteKey=44fe2fe0-5560-4283-981a-c15fe691b1d1)
  6. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/)