

Are all urban trees created equal?

Benchmarking for evidence-based urban forest policy and planning

*Informal Network of Experts on Sustainable Urban Forestry
UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 Virtual Side Event*

12 December 2022
15h00 – 17h00 CET

Background Information

By 2050, over two-thirds of humanity will live in cities, which are already responsible for around 75% of global CO₂ emissions. Cities are therefore at the forefront of fighting climate change. Sustainably managed urban trees and forests are an integrative and cost-effective nature-based solution that provide vital benefits for biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, health and wellbeing, and sustainable development. This contributes not only to sustainable local development, but also to national objectives and to most SDGs.

While tree planting has received increasing attention in recent years for its multiple benefits, it is critical to ensure that urban trees and forests survive and thrive. Achieving this, and thereby unlocking these benefits, depends on sustainable long-term planning, budgeting and management of urban forests as part of an integrated socio-ecological system with the right tree in the right place for the right reason. A sound understanding of existing and potential tree and forest cover is needed to inform the elaboration of these plans and support the sustainable management of existing and newly tree cover.

While advancing sustainable urban forestry, cities and experts report that a lack of urban forestry benchmarks makes it difficult to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) targets during urban forestry planning and to assess whether plans are realistic, ambitious and well-targeted. It also hampers efforts to comparably define and measure urban tree and forest cover across cities, which is necessary to support national urban forest policy and support to local authorities. Thus, comparable, relevant and clearly defined benchmarks can inform policy and long-term planning, and back and sustain efficient and effective urban forest management, from the city to the national level. This supports the implementation of urban forestry as a nature-based solution for local and national goals.

Responding to this need, through the [Informal Network of Experts on Sustainable Urban Forestry](#), UNECE has developed an urban forest benchmarking survey. This event will explore the importance of - and challenges in - benchmarking urban forestry and provide an opportunity to share input on the benchmarking objectives and data collection needs and challenges prior to the launch of the benchmarking survey.

This meeting is generously supported by:



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Meeting Agenda

Interpretation available in English – French – Spanish – Russian

Welcome and Scene Setting

- 15h00 **Urban Forestry: An Integrative Nature-Based Solution**
Ms. Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Chief, UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section
- 15h10 *Question and Answer*
- 15h15 **Benchmarking Goals and Opportunities**
Mr. Daniel Griswold, UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section
- 15h30 *Question and Answer*

Benchmarking Needs and Challenges

- 15h35 **City perspective: Assessing feasibility and planning ambition**
Ms. Brooke Stark, Manager – Park Planning & Urban Forestry, City of Victoria, Canada
- 15h50 *Question and Answer*
- 15h55 **Civil society perspective: Greenwashing and holding authorities accountable**
Mr. Ian McDermott, Birmingham Tree People
- 16h10 *Question and Answer*
- 16h15 **Expert perspective: Comparing diverse cities beyond tree counts**
Ms. Yvonne Lynch
- 16h30 *Question and Answer*

Moderated Discussion

- 16h35 Participant input on benchmarking objectives and priorities

Closing

- 16h55 UNECE

Meeting Registration

The meeting will include simultaneous interpretation in English, French, Spanish, and Russian.

The number of participants is limited, so please scan the QR code or click [here](#) to register today.

