

World Urban Parks Association

Media release

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World Congress resolutions recognise value of urban parks

Leading parks professionals and parks agencies from around the world resolved to protect and enhance the world's urban parks and green spaces in the face of looming global challenges at this week's World Urban Parks and IERM Congress in South Africa.

The Congress included over 70 speakers from all corners of the globe.

World Urban Parks CEO Dr Digby Whyte said key issues facing society were addressed, including climate change, and how to mitigate the challenges posed by population growth and increasing urbanisation.

Dr Whyte said this is a challenging time for societies around the world, with the world population expected to grow from 7.5 billion currently to 9.7 billion in 2050. More than half of the world's population currently lives in cities, and the majority of growth is anticipated in urban areas. Africa is expected to account for more than half of the growth, with the populations of 28 African countries expected to double over this time.

Urban parks play a vital role in overcoming these challenges, and increased awareness of their value from decision makers was "immensely important", he said.

"Urban parks play a vital role in creating a sense of place and cultural identity. They provide opportunities for sport and recreation, health and well-being, community meeting places, social cohesion, biodiversity, environment and ecosystem services, forms of active transportation such as cycling and walking, and tourism and economic development."

During the Congress, World Urban Parks committed to strongly advocate for the importance of protecting and developing urban parks, and provide tools and support to members to assist with problems we face as a sector and the opportunities for innovation.

Dr Whyte said delegates were inspired to apply the key learnings from the Congress, ensuring strong engagement with citizens and equitable access to open space.

The World Urban Parks Congress was held at the President Hotel in Cape Town, South Africa from 26 to 28 September in conjunction with the annual Institute of Environment and Recreation Management Convention.

A communique from the 2nd World Urban Parks Congress can be found at <http://worldurbanparks.org/images/Conferences/The-Cape-Town-Commitments.pdf>.

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Notes for journalists

World Urban Parks is the international representative body for urban parks, open space and recreation. For further information, visit www.worldurbanparks.org.

The Institute of Environment and Recreation Management is a leading public sector organisation promoting sustainable and integrated environmental and recreation management practices in South Africa. For further information, visit <http://www.ierm.org.za>.