

urban sustainable environment

“All interest sectors involved in achieving sustainable urban development have genuine but differing ‘visions’ of the future... these ideals remain within their discrete worlds and are rarely acknowledged or understood outside their expert communities”

K. Williams, 2010, International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development

FUELING THE DEBATE

- What kind of models do we need to assess urban climate processes?
- How important is local governance in adaptation and mitigation?
- What type of adaptation policies are needed to address citizens’ needs, in particular those of the most vulnerable?
- What type of financing mechanisms can match local needs, in particular for infrastructures?
- How can market priorities be reconciled with the basic needs of communities?

CURRENT CONTEXT

Cities represent both the greatest challenge and the greatest hope for a sustainable future. The world’s largest cities account for 70% of the world’s CO₂ emissions. Over 90% of urban areas are located in coastal areas and face growing risks of flooding due to climate change. UN projections suggest that almost all the growth in the world’s population over the next two decades will be in urban areas in today’s low- and middle-income countries. The doubling of the urban population will be accompanied by a tripling of the built-up area of cities. Fast-paced urbanization that further concentrates populations, economic activity, disaster risk and greenhouse gas emissions in cities will only make urban environmental policy more important.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Part of the solution to the challenges of climate change and urbanization is found in cities themselves. Cities represent both the greatest challenge and the greatest hope for a sustainable future. The density and innovative capacity of cities provide a unique opportunity for cities and metropolitan governments to promote more sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Local governments are leading on climate change from the bottom up. Through effective urban governance and planning they are harnessing the agglomeration advantages of cities to limit urban sprawl, and reduce disaster risk and greenhouse gas emissions: ►

- The **Cities Climate Registry (cCCR)** global reporting platform was set up in 2010 to allow cities and local governments to report and monitor their energy and climate commitments, greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation and adaptation actions.
- 51 cities representing 83 millions of inhabitants have recorded their environmental initiatives in the Carbons registry. Together the cities in the

Carbons registry have achieved a reduction in their emissions of 447 million CO2 tons.

- Local and regional governments and their organizations formed the **Compact of Mayors** in March 2014, with the support of the UN Secretary General, to showcase their initiatives and commitments to reducing city emissions.

MAIN CHALLENGES

Urban Environment



Reduce urban environmental and air pollution by improving waste and wastewater management, increasing the use of clean fuels

Greenhouse Gases



Achieve marked reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption through improved buildings and transport management

Climate Change



Develop robust urban climate change and disaster resilience plans integrated into national climate adaptation and mitigation plans

Natural Disasters



Support local governments and stakeholders to better prepare to mitigate and respond to natural disasters

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve urban planning to reduce urban sprawl and land consumption
- Develop policies to modify consumption patterns
- Promote sustainable mobility systems and adequate mass transport
- Develop participatory resilience plans to ensure mitigation and adaptation to climate change and natural disasters threats.

- Reduce greenhouse emissions and increase energy efficiency in buildings and infrastructure
- Use the potential of the green economy to boost local economic development and create jobs
- Improve the relationship of urban areas with their rural hinterlands and regions to optimize the use of resources

- Open up access to green financing mechanisms and emissions trading schemes to sub-national governments
- Engage citizens, civil society, and the private sector to respond jointly to define long term visions for their communities