Environmental Integrity Group (EIG): Republic of Korea, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Monaco and Switzerland

Submission to the UNFCCC / 8 October 2009

Cities and climate change

Cities and urban areas - home to 50% of the world's population - are responsible for up to 75% of the global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. They cover less than one per cent of the earth's surface but 75% of all energy is consumed by the world's urban population. Several cities worldwide are already demonstrating leadership, taking responsibility for their GHG emissions and working towards their sustainability. In fact, a large number of cities have already put forward their own ambitious emission reductions targets achieving significant greenhouse gas reductions in many cases. Moreover, cities around the world have set networks and partnerships to join efforts on climate action. On this basis, we consider that cities can go even further if they have the right tools and support from their national governments, as well as from bilateral and multilateral cooperation programs under an enabling national and international framework.

Given that by 2030 it is expected that two thirds of the world population will live in urban areas, the cities' importance for combating climate change will even increase. Thereby, enhanced mitigation actions in the cities could play a pivotal role within the future framework of national appropriate mitigation actions in developed and developing countries, and in meeting national quantified emissions reduction targets for countries that have agreed such. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action under the Convention has included considerations on cities and climate change in several sections of its negotiating text. Those references reflect the acknowledgement of diverse Parties on the need of bringing the issue into focus.

Cities are also particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts. The rapid pace of urbanization and the high concentration of population living in urban areas increase the overall vulnerability of cities to climate change. The location of many cities in high-risk zones contributes to enhancing their vulnerability to floods, heat waves, droughts and other potential climate and hydro-meteorological dangers. Local air pollution is affected by climate change, too. Further, in the case of cities in developing countries, the size and vulnerability of informal settlements, generally built in fragile areas, also increases the attention that cities must pay to adaptation as part of their development strategies.

Cities concentrate as well a vast quantity of resources, infrastructure and economic activity, that must be protected from climate impacts. The particular characteristics and features of urban areas demand tailored adaptation measures and strategies.

We recognize that adaptation and mitigation measures need to go hand in hand and that they mutually reinforce the opportunities and benefits of promoting climate action in urban areas.

The potential of cities to contribute to climate change action

In many fields relevant for climate change action, cities are important as investors or regulators. This includes in particular the broad spectrum of municipal infrastructure where cities or pro-active city networks as C40 can provide strategic influence and deliver or act as catalysts for action:

- **Transport** - increase the use of public transport and ensure that transport is low or zero emission; establish smart traffic guidance systems which reduce congestion and ease access; establish incentives for better fuel performance and CO2 reduction in new vehicles, and for renewing the vehicular pool.
- **Waste** - pioneer energy from advanced waste management technologies such as anaerobic digestion and gasification in municipal landfills or sewage treatment plants; promote waste reduction through reuse and recycling of resources.
- **Lighting -** accelerate the uptake of energy efficient lighting in homes and on streets, such as CFLs and LED's (Light Emitting Diodes).
- **Renewable energy** - lead and encourage the uptake and use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, mini-hydro and biomass.
- **District heating** - develop modern highly efficient energy networks, delivering heat and power locally and improving energy security in places where these systems are needed and used.
- **Efficient water supply**- boost water efficiency through sharing best practices on efficient water supply systems and usage among cities, municipality and rural areas, thus reducing energy consumption for pumping.
- **Energy efficiency** – support environmentally sound technologies and promote energy-efficiency and co-generation in the industry as well as in public utilities; develop and implement standards on energy efficiency for industrial and domestic systems and appliances.
- **Building Sector** – reduce energy losses in heating or air condition across a city by retrofitting public, private and commercial buildings; foster policies that promote that new developments consider low carbon measures and technologies and in some cases even get carbon neutral.

Regarding **adaptation**, cities can develop sector and social vulnerability assessments considering the particular characteristics and features of urban areas, and favor the design and implementation of urban adaptation strategies as part of national climate change and development plans.

Moreover, cities can positively influence **behavioural change** – engaging citizens and entrepreneurs in reducing their carbon footprint. Cities can take up sustainability criteria in their procurement, thus implementing the concepts developed by the Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement.

All in all, cities have the unique opportunity to guide the **spatial development** (urban planning) and limit the carbon footprint of their economies. They can accelerate the move towards sustainable cities through strategic long term, integrated approaches, infrastructure investments and regulatory measures (enabling policy framework).

Many of the above mentioned fields do qualify for carbon finance – different CDM–methodologies exist. Nevertheless, it has proved difficult so far to develop CDM projects in many of those fields due to the barriers and constraints that the CDM currently faces. In this regard, it is necessary to improve the CDM and tailor methodologies to specific cities needs, and promote them amongst municipal authorities. So far, local authorities have been strongly under-represented as developers of CDM-projects.

This emphasizes the need for local capacity building and a better understanding between national governments and the cities on potential carbon mitigation projects that might exist. Targeted capacity building programmes like the World Bank's Carbon Finance Assist (www.cfassist.org) help to address this issue.

Motion

The Environmental Integrity Group Invites the UNFCCC:

a) To recognise the role, achievements and potential of cities in climate change action.
b) To recognize that strategic investments in low-carbon cities, such as promoting cities access to national and international cooperation programmes to combat climate change, will result in reductions in greenhouse gas emissions as well as stronger national economies due to increased demand for innovation and green technologies, the associated job creation, as well as reduced energy costs.
c) To suggest that the IPCC add a chapter on cities to its Working Group and Synthesis Reports.
d) To encourage the development of strategies, programmes, projects, and partnerships that focus on the ability of cities to respond and adapt to climate change, and to make major contributions to mitigation actions of national significance, contributing to meet – where applicable - national targets for greenhouse gas reductions.

The role national governments

Cities are already engaging in climate change action, but want to do more, as recently expressed in the “Seoul Declaration” of the 3rd C40 Large Cities Climate Summit (18-21 May 2009 in Seoul, Republic of Korea).

Now, Parties are invited to support their cities as actors of climate change mitigation and adaptation through the following means:

1) Engage closely with their city leaders, whose responsibility for critical services mean they are well placed to support the delivery of GHG emissions reductions. Cooperation is needed in many relevant fields such as the trade and investments framework, tariff setting (e.g. energy tariffs, feed-in tariffs) infrastructure planning (e.g. linking local and national transport systems), business regulations relevant for technology transfer.
2) Empower their cities through supportive framework conditions, in particular through an enabling policy framework, institutional cooperation and by lifting constraints to cities so that they can take action within cities to drive down GHG emissions.
3) Resource their cities so that they are equipped with the relevant tools, services and finance, including carbon finance, that will enable them to develop national appropriate mitigation actions, and to deliver on nationally agreed GHG reduction targets where such have been agreed.
4) Support cities in their effort to create GHG inventories and citywide mitigation and adaptation strategies with concrete climate change action plans.
5) Encourage knowledge exchange and benchmarking between cities on low-carbon strategies and adaptation plans, including city twinning arrangements. Establish an efficient communication and decision procedures between the DNA and the municipal administrations potentially engaged in climate change mitigation, and continuously increase efficiency and transparency of the DNA.
6) Seek systematic coordination and active participation of the cities – and other sub-national entities as appropriate – when developing, formulating and implementing national climate change strategies.