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UNEP  
United Nations Environment Programme

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United Cities and Local Governments  
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## PRESS RELEASE

### THE CHALLENGES OF POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE CALL FOR NEW TYPES OF GOVERNANCE

(Ch. 5: The urban environment and climate change; Ch. 6: Urban governance, management and finance in Asia)

The environmental hazards deriving from Asia's rapid economic and demographic growth stand to be compounded by the effects of climate change, threatening the competitiveness at the root of the region's prosperity, according to UN-HABITAT's State of Asian Cities Report 2010/11. Cities in the region must adopt fresh governance modes in order to pave the way for more sustainable, inclusive development patterns.

#### INNOVATIVE SCHEMES CAN TACKLE POLLUTION

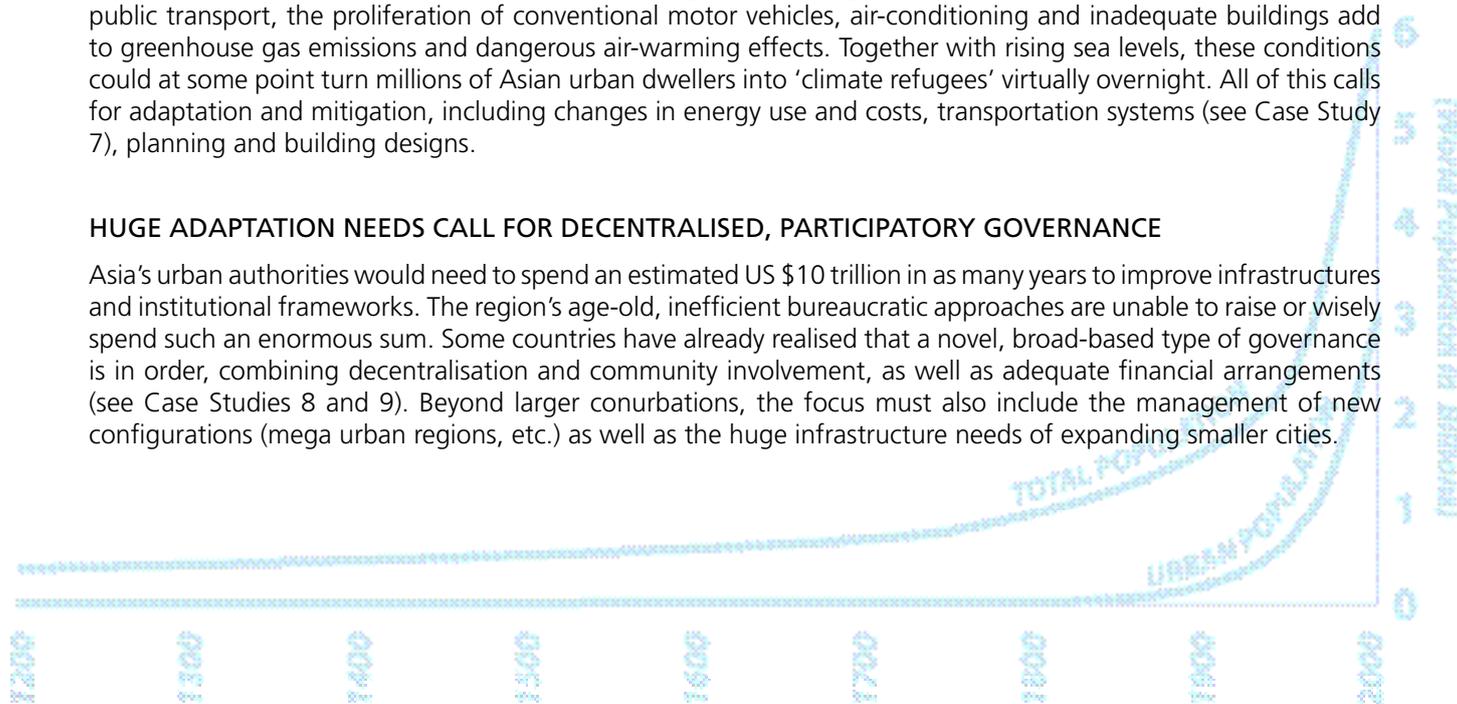
Together with poor planning and infrastructures, inadequate waste management and transport modes generate serious pollution to the detriment of overall urban conditions, especially for the poor. A number of cities in China, India and Japan have responded with innovative schemes which must be widely replicated. Bangladesh and India (see Case Study 6), in particular, has demonstrated how a problem – waste – can be turned into a resource. Further undermining Asia's urban-led growth model is the challenge of water supplies and food security in many cities, which some rural areas are already facing.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE STANDS TO COMPOUND NATURAL DISASTERS

Apart from man-made hazards, Asian cities are already the most vulnerable in the world to natural disasters. On top of all this, climate change, with its effects on monsoon and rainfall patterns, will have a significant impact, especially on those coastal cities that often are the engines of the region's prosperity (see Figure 5.7). Unsustainable public transport, the proliferation of conventional motor vehicles, air-conditioning and inadequate buildings add to greenhouse gas emissions and dangerous air-warming effects. Together with rising sea levels, these conditions could at some point turn millions of Asian urban dwellers into 'climate refugees' virtually overnight. All of this calls for adaptation and mitigation, including changes in energy use and costs, transportation systems (see Case Study 7), planning and building designs.

#### HUGE ADAPTATION NEEDS CALL FOR DECENTRALISED, PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Asia's urban authorities would need to spend an estimated US \$10 trillion in as many years to improve infrastructures and institutional frameworks. The region's age-old, inefficient bureaucratic approaches are unable to raise or wisely spend such an enormous sum. Some countries have already realised that a novel, broad-based type of governance is in order, combining decentralisation and community involvement, as well as adequate financial arrangements (see Case Studies 8 and 9). Beyond larger conurbations, the focus must also include the management of new configurations (mega urban regions, etc.) as well as the huge infrastructure needs of expanding smaller cities.



This first-ever State of Asian Cities Report 2010/11 is a collaborative effort between UN-HABITAT and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Cities and Local Governments – Asia-Pacific Regional Section (UCLG-ASPAC)

## SOME COUNTRIES ARE MORE CRITICALLY EXPOSED, UN-HABITAT CAN HELP

Adapting to climate change is a vital challenge for poorer Asian countries such as Bangladesh, as well as the smaller Pacific and Indian Ocean island states, due to very limited resources and options. Many cities in the region are already taking advantage of UN-HABITAT's Sustainable Cities Programme and the more recent Cities and Climate Change Initiative.

Together with political leadership, adequate financial, human, institutional and legal resources or frameworks make major contributions to any city's competitiveness, and mobilising these behind an inclusive vision is the next task for urban governance in Asia.