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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



nrg4SD



I.C.L.E.I
Local Governments
for Sustainability



Side Event at UNCSD – Rio+20 - PrepCom 2 -New York
Monday 7 March 2011, 1:15 - 2:45 pm

Towards a Green Economy: promoting sustainable urban development and green infrastructure investment

Organizing partners

United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, UNECE

ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability)

nrg4SD (Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development)

LBSACC (London Business School Alumni Carbon Club)

Background

This side event was held in conjunction with the 2nd Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), due to take place in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro (Rio 2012). The side event brought together stakeholders from both public and private sectors to share experiences and explore approaches to enhance action by cities towards the green economy, within the context of sustainable urban development and green infrastructure investment. The event also served as the launch of a series of public-private round tables on investing in green infrastructure.

Urban Patterns for Sustainable Development: Towards a Green Economy, Dr. Joan Clos,
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

Cities have a vital role to play in the realization of sustainable development and poverty eradication in the context of a green economy. According to UN-HABITAT, the transition towards green urban areas relies on 7 main strategies: (1) Embrace land mosaic patterns that provide for large green

patches and more sustainable urban development; (2) Promote compact cities and planned extension of urban areas in opposition to unplanned urban sprawl; (3) Balance strategic facilities with diversified local economic opportunities; (4) Expand network infrastructure while getting the most out of existing networks; (5) Construct greener built environments that use water and energy efficiently; (6) Protect valuable ecosystem services and biodiversity hotspots while increasing resilience to some natural disasters; and (7) Promote clusters of green industries and green jobs.

Examples from all over the world show that the development of green cities is an achievable goal, however there are still many challenges for governments, policy makers and practitioners to overcome. Increasing cooperation among the local governments, adopting an integrated approach and measuring and benchmarking issues such as competitiveness or energy and resource intensity of cities are among the most important steps to be taken in order to foster a sustainable urban development.



Vitoria-Gasteiz: Green outside, green inside, Mr Patxi Lazcoz, Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain (Winner of the European Green Capital Award)

Radical changes were implemented in the transport system, including the introduction of bike lanes, new local public transport network and establishing charging points for electric vehicles and car-sharing programmes, in partnership with other public institutions.



Green Urban Economy: Quezon City, Philippines & Belo Horizonte, Brazil, Susanne Salz, Executive and Policy Assistant to the Secretary General, ICLEI World Secretariat

- **Quezon City: Green Urban Economy Initiatives:** Reducing disaster risk, improving the environment and contributing to economic growth are the three pillars of Quezon City's sustainable development. A waste management project including community and school based activities has led to a diversion of 38 % of waste from dumpsite. Further initiatives such as developing green spaces and relocating informal settlements are underway to contribute to Quezon City's sustainable development.
- **Belo Horizonte: Urban Management and Inclusiveness:** A sustainable development project was launched in the slum of Vila Viva in 2005. The project focused on key areas of sanitation, drainage, water supply, urban cleaning, restructuring of housing system

and land regularization. In addition, areas of high geological risks were eradicated through the provisions of dams, revegetation and treatment of slopes. From a social-organizational approach, the project delivered health and environmental education programmes, including professional training in community needs assessment and employment generation.

Case Study: Recycling in San Antonio Texas, Mr. Matt Delnick, Chief Executive Officer, Greenstar Recycling

Recycling is an important component of a green urban economy. The success of the recycling program developed in San Antonio mainly relied on the commitment of the local authority to sustainability, community education, customer convenience and a public/private partnership. This project had positive environmental imprints (landfill emissions decreased, energy consumption reduced, space preserved...) but also economic impacts with the creation of more than 125 green jobs. The key recommendations for success of such projects are community and government engagement to recycling, proper programme design, working with experienced and committed recycling partners and continuous education.

Nantes: A European Green Capital, Mr. Ronan Dantec, Deputy Mayor of Nantes, France (Winner of the European Green Capital Award)

The Deputy Mayor of Nantes provided the panel and participants with an overview of Nantes sustainable public transport and cycling policy, which was the first city to successfully reintroduce electric trams as part of its public transport system. The success of this integrated system relied heavily on community participation and engagement with all stakeholders. Finally, political will and financial resources are essential to implement the changes towards sustainable cities and green economy.

Moderator's Conclusions

In his concluding remarks, Tom Stewart of Booz and Co, moderator of the side event, highlighted the following issues:

- Promoting sustainable urban development in the context of a green economy is a complex undertaking, which must be based on a solid assessment of economic, social, environmental, spatial and institutional opportunities and challenges;



- Multi-sectoral action (urban planning, mobility, buildings, solid waste, energy, slum upgrading) and multi-stakeholder action (central government, local government, utilities, research institutions, households) is required to make significant progress;
- Political will at various levels is critical for promoting long term systemic change towards a green urban economy;
- Green economy initiatives must be designed with the aim of achieving “wins” for everyone, including private sector investors and the urban poor;
- One of the key challenges is to decouple the rate of economic growth from the rate of increase of greenhouse gases emissions.

Contact points at the lead agencies

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