

Statements by Local Authorities' Major Group

16 February 2009

As input for the discussion within the 25th UNEP Governing Council and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum on 'Globalization and the environment – global crises: national chaos'

Key statement: 'Cities - major partners towards a green economy'

The 25th UNEP Governing council meeting is requested to consider cities as major partners towards a green economy and in establishing a Green New Deal. The Governing Council meeting is also requested to support cities in their contribution to realising the green economy. Coherence of policies should also include local governments. (Please find more detailed statements below.)

Background

Cities are the economic hubs of the global economy:

- Cities inhabit over 50% of the world's population or 3.3 billion people lives in cities.
- Every day 193,107 new city dwellers are added to the world's urban population, which translates to slightly more than two people every second. [Source: UN HABITAT, State of the World's cities 2008-2009]
- Cities occupy 2% of the world's land but consume 75% of its resources, and they generate a similar percentage of waste.
- In Asia in 2004, urban areas representing 40% of the total population contributed about 80% of the gross domestic product (GDP). (ADB)
- East Asia's urban populations produce 92 % of their countries welfare. The percentage is 77% for Southeast Asia and 75% for South Asia. (ADB)
- Around 30% of national GDP in the UK, Sweden, Japan and France are accounted for by London, Stockholm, Tokyo and Paris respectively (OECD).
- A single one of the largest metropolises has a population equivalent to the 150 smallest UN member states altogether. In many countries, the largest metropolis account for 10-30% of the country's population and 10-30% of the GDP of the entire country, and a similar share of energy consumption and CO2 emissions.
- Johannesburg generates 30% of South Africa's GDP und 11% of the GDI of the whole African continent. Sao Paulo generates 12,3% of Brazil's GDP, Seoul 24% of Korea's GDP.
- "Large cities typically produce a significant share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of their countries. For instance, Bangkok alone contributes 38 percent towards Thailand's GDP, more than the GDP of any of the agriculture-based economies in Africa."
[Source - <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/istanbul+5/statereport1.htm>]
- On average, municipalities obtain about US\$ 2,906 per capita in revenue per year.
[Source - <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/istanbul+5/statereport1.htm>]

Cities concentrate problems

In many cases, the large cities of a country cause 30-80% of the entire country's CO2 emissions, mainly through:

- building sector
- transport
- industry
- power production

Exclusion and poverty in most OECD countries have become urban phenomena. These lead to high levels of criminality. (OECD)

Large cities tend to contain disproportionate numbers of people who are economically „inactive“ or who work

in the informal economy. (OECD)

Statements

Green local economies should be created with the following characteristics:

- (a) economies that are resource-efficient; scarcity of resources such as drinking water or fertile soil to produce food require making efficient use of the resources available.
- (b) economies that ensure an equitable distribution of scarce resources. If a resource is scarce, its price goes up. Usually, only affluent people can afford such high-priced goods. But it cannot be considered "green" if a scarce resource is available to the rich but unaffordable and thus unavailable to the poor. The scarcer the resource, the more the aspect of equity gains weight.
- (c) economies that avoid pollution: air pollution, groundwater and surface water pollution, solid waste, liquid waste, nuclear waste, waste heat, and the toxification of the ecosystem in whatever way. These are „cradle to cradle“, or „cycle“ economies.
- (d) economies that are labour intensive rather than energy intensive. This ensures that the production of a goods or delivery of a service provides jobs rather than letting the jobs being carried out by expensive machines that consume a lot of energy, the production of which causes pollution. Of course, this requires jobs and labour conditions to be decent, clean and healthy.

Cities involvement in priority areas

Low carbon cities should be seen as one of the priority green economic sectors. Also in the following areas cities are of utmost relevance:

- Clean and efficient technologies, including Renewable energy technologies
- Biodiversity
- Ecological infrastructure

Coherent policies: include local governments

We agree on the need for implementation of coherent policies, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects.

We also agree on the need for collaboration between various sectoral ministries.

We urge governments to acknowledge the key role that other spheres of government play and to institute effective schemes of vertical collaboration, or „comprehensive governance“.

Invitation:

Please be invited to the side event organised by ICLEI, UNEP and UN-HABITAT on 'Cities-Leaders towards a Green Economy' on Thursday 19 February 2009, from 13.30-14.30 in Conference Room 13. Lunch will be served from 13.00-13.30h outside of the venue.