



HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE CITIES

UNDER THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EAST ASIA
SUMMIT ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS MEETING

8 - 10 MARCH 2018
CAMBODIA



Annex 3. Key Points and Messages from the Sessions

9th East Asia Summit (EAS) High-level Seminar on Sustainable Cities

– Sustainable Cities: Sustainability and means of implementation for successful initiative –

8-10 March 2018

Siem Reap, Cambodia

Over two days, a series of plenary and thematic sessions were held to enable active knowledge exchange and discussion among seminar participants. The key points of each session are summarised below.

1) Keynote Session – What is Sustainability for Asian Cities and How to Achieve It

- a) Asian cities play a very critical role in achieving global sustainability with large population and accumulation of socio-economic activities. A paradigm shift of urban planning and development is in need in the region.
- b) It is important for cities to turn urban challenges into opportunities. Not only mega cities, but also fast growing small and medium-sized cities need to promote sustainable urban planning and development now. International and national support to such cities is also an important element to enhance sustainable cities in the region.
- c) By learning from past experiences, cities can avoid repeating the same trial and error as in the past. Leap-frogging approach should be facilitated through learning among different cities and stakeholders. In particular, it is useful to learn from good governance models to address the complex and cross-cutting nature of urban management.
- d) Financing is an important aspect in urban development and there are many options available such as tax policy reform, public-private partnership, promotion of city-to-city collaboration and utilization of international finance.
- e) It is important to implement SDGs and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) together with other universal agreements. Reporting of their progress of implementation is already underway.

- f) A more coherent institutional and policy framework is the major element to address these wide-ranging diverse issues in a more integrated manner such as integration of urban policy, climate change policy and disaster risk reduction policy, and coordination between implementation and monitoring is an essential requirement.
- g) Such a framework needs to be recognized and positioned within the national development framework, and should also be responsible for coordinating monitoring and reporting of relevant SDGs, localization of SDGs and the NUA;
- h) HLS is a good opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge among different stakeholders and find innovative ways for cities.

2) Plenary I – SDG11 – Road to Sustainable City

- a) Engagement and inclusiveness of different stakeholders is critical in promotion of sustainable cities. Partnership with the private sector and citizens can accelerate city actions to address urban development challenges. Local governments should ensure participation of stakeholders from planning to implementation stage of urban planning.
- b) Integration of plans and strategies in different sectors should be strengthened in urban management. Indicators to measure sustainability level of cities would be a useful tool to monitor the progress of city actions.
- c) Exchange of experiences among cities should be further promoted to accelerate city actions for sustainability.

3) Plenary II – Finance, Data and Capacity Development for SDGs Actions at City Level

- a) Data and information are critical to inform the development of policies, as well as to provide certainty for investment in local infrastructure. Collection of data and information is a necessary first step to plan actions that will support the SDGs and attract finance.
- b) Capacity development, especially to strengthen fiscal management, must be part of any efforts to increase investments, including from Official Development Assistance. Strong fiscal management and accountability, including multi-level governance that defines national and local roles and oversight, as appropriate, is necessary if local actions are to be scaled up.
- c) The potential for financial investments is strengthened by robust planning processes that are linked to national objectives, local development needs and where appropriate, the SDGs. Reporting and measurement is a critical component of the planning process.

4) Plenary III – City-Private Sector Partnership for Sustainable Future

- a) Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a way to promote sustainable urban development. It is recommendable for private companies such as property developers and railway companies that should have a long-term perspective in TOD. Local governments should collaborate with such private companies in urban planning and management.
- b) Businesses are encouraged to recognize the importance of sustainable and socially responsible policies which improve the welfare of employees, which is in line with the long-term economic interests of the business as well as of broader society.

- c) Excellent collaboration among the national government, local governments, private sector and general society is a critical factor to successfully implement sustainable actions at the city level.

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5) Plenary IV – SDGs and Sustainable Resilient Cities

- a) Effective implementation and monitoring of the SDGs require effective coordination and collaboration across line ministries, at all levels of government and in all sectors of society. National governments are well positioned to lead and sustain the multi-level and multi-stakeholder process for realizing the SDGs.
- b) Although many ASEAN countries are persistently held back by insufficient resources and lack of human capacity, they may make incremental progress on the SDGs by nurturing and targeting support to a group of ‘Model cities’ and ‘frontrunner cities’ in their country who will implement pilot projects with concrete actions and results.
- c) In parallel with ‘top down’ support, cities are also empowered by learning from their peers. Successful pilot projects may be ultimately scaled up to a wider number of cities within a country, while critical insights and inspiration may be meaningfully shared across many cities in many countries.

6) Thematic Session A – SDG6 Water and Sanitation and Cities

a) Thematic A1 – ‘How to Achieve Sustainable Urban Water Supply’

Finance is key to achieve sustainable urban water supply. Water tariffs do not ensure profit because tariffs are subjected to political decision. Instead, full cost recovery through increase of operational efficiency is an effective way to improve profits and ensure financial sustainability of the urban water supply. The most challenging barriers to achieve the SDGs in the urban water sector are political will and competent management.

<Key Messages>

- a) Integrated water resources management (IWRM) should be incorporated into planning and implementation of water supply projects, which can ensure sustainability of water resources that are subject to different uses.
- b) Empowerment of local government is critical to increase quality and competence of service delivery and administration. Ownership at the local level and also hearing people’s voices are also important elements to ensure sustainability of water services.
- c) Good governance is the basis of good water services. This can be strengthened through adequate water supply policy, efficient water regulations and with competent management—“Head, Heart and Hands”, in other words, management with proper knowledge, fair mind and good will, accompanied by actions.

b) Thematic A2 – ‘Towards Sustainable Cities: Challenges and Way Forward in Sanitation and Wastewater Management’

In many cases, wastewater is discharged into the environment without treatment or with inadequate treatment. Wastewater management is the responsibility of local governments, but often their expertise and experience is insufficient. The challenges in sanitation and wastewater management shared in the session also include insufficient budget, unclear responsibility of relevant organisations, improper maintenance of treatment facilities, and lack of public awareness.

<Key Messages>

- a) Water supply and wastewater management should be promoted together. Technology options for wastewater treatment are available, and wastewater treatment can be introduced in a shorter period of time if it is planned together with water supply.
- b) Commitments from national and local governments in sanitation and wastewater management should be increased. The SDGs could become a factor that encourages more investment in the sanitation and wastewater management sector, though the SDGs are sometimes not well known in local governments.
- c) Raising public awareness, encouraging of public participation as well as government involvement in sanitation projects should be strengthened for areas such as the construction of wastewater treatment facilities at the community level. The introduction of simple technology/small-scale facilities can become the trigger to raise the awareness of a population or community.
- d) Mayors/decision-makers determined to improve sanitation and wastewater management in their jurisdiction should be identified to encourage the development of "champion cities", which can showcase good practices and motivate other cities.
- e) Training institutions and a certification system at the national level for human resource development should be enhanced to enable the provision of expert/trained staff to local governments, which are in many cases the entities in charge of managing sanitation and wastewater in their jurisdiction.
- f) Legal and regulatory frameworks for sanitation and wastewater management should be developed, as these are often missing. A case in point is fecal sludge management.

7) Thematic Session B: SDG12 Responsible Consumption and Production and Cities

a) Thematic B1 – Sustainable Lifestyle, Sustainable Consumption and Production, and Circular Economy

Cities consume 75% of natural resources and account for 50% of waste. Considering the continuous growth in urban population, and it is necessary to change our lifestyle for both local and global sustainability. Speeding up, up-scaling and being progressive as well as conducting innovative actions should be promoted to achieve transformative change in the society through the following actions.

- a) It is important to communicate the concept of SCP, Sustainable Lifestyle and Education (SLE) globally. Education for youth on sustainable lifestyles should be strengthened.

- b) Engaging policymakers, the business sector and institutions in the implementation of programmes on SCPs is also a critical driver to promote SCP and SLE.
- c) It is not the intention of all people to produce waste but it is rather a consequence of well-being or economic growth of our society. We in the ASEAN region must move collectively towards better direction reflecting SDGs- Agenda 2030.

b) Thematic B2 – Waste Management for Sustainable City

Immediate actions are necessary in the waste sector regardless of the size and level of development of cities in the region. Positive progress in waste management in ASEAN cities was reported in the session. Continuity of waste management often becomes difficult after completing public-funded projects.

<Key Message>

- a) Involvement of different stakeholders including local governments, the private sector, and citizens is imperative in successful waste management.
- b) Solutions for waste management such in finance differs in the local context. However, a combination of available resources from the private sector, local government, national government including ODA and other initiatives, is a key element to promote sustainable waste management.
- c) Support from successfully transformed cities/government or learning from their experiences should be promoted. Platform such as HLS and city-to-city collaboration can facilitate transformation of current waste management to more be sustainable.

8) Thematic Session C: SDGs 7 Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency for Sustainable City

Promotion of renewable energy options can promote sustainable development of cities through utilization of local resources available and creation of economic benefits. Encouraging examples of local actions to promote actions for zero-carbon city such through renewable energy introduction was shared in the session. The session also identified that the role of national government is also critical to promote low-carbon cities and renewable energy at the local level such as setting a policy framework and provision of support to local governments.

<Key Messages>

- a) Spreading best practices, building networks, and strengthening partnerships among different stakeholders should be promoted to fill the gap between the increasing need for renewable energy and insufficient knowledge and capacity to introduce or manage it at the local level.
- b) Continuity of initiatives/projects is an important element for successful projects. Necessary arrangements and international and national support is also necessary.

9) Thematic Session D: Sustainable tourism and Green Space for City

Tourism in Asia has been growing, but it can also generate problems such as waste, environmental degradation in air and water, and unsustainable land development. Many initiatives to promote sustainable tourism have been taken but such initiatives should be further strengthened.

<Key Messages>

- a) Tourism must be resource efficient: make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- b) Tourism must respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- c) Tourism must ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

10) Kick-off of 'ASEAN SDGs Frontrunner Cities Programme' (Plenary V)

It is announced that the ASEAN SDGs Frontrunner Cities Programme was approved by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) as the successor of the ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme. The seminar participants welcomed the new and scaled-up programme to support selected cities in ASEAN in achieving ASEAN sustainable cities as envisioned in the ASEAN Socio Cultural Blueprint 2025 and SDGs, through creating multi-dimensional benefit model cases at the local level.