

High Level Seminar on Environmentally Sustainable Cities

under the Framework of the East Asia Summit Environment Ministers Meeting

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

I) PREAMBLE

- **East Asia** has undergone remarkable development through rapid industrialization, population expansion and urban growth over the years. More than 40 per cent of the people in the Asia-Pacific region currently live in urban areas. The urban population in the region is expected to reach 2.23 billion by 2020, making it the largest urban population in the world. Urban population is then expected to rise to 2.64 billion by 2030, constituting 55 per cent of the region's total projected population.¹ Out of the world's 25 megacities, 15 are currently located in Asia, while the size and number of large- and medium-sized cities are expected to grow.
- **The sustainability of the current pattern of rapid urbanization in the region is a cause of concern;** overwhelming burdens are being placed on the environment and increasingly strained urban services, causing serious environmental degradation and leaving many to subsist in grinding poverty and abject living conditions.
- **Many cities in the region, including coastal mega-cities, are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change;** particularly from sea-level rise,

¹ Projections by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

as well as increased frequency and intensity of droughts, floods and extreme weather incidents, which necessitate initiatives to build climate resilience and adaptive capacity.

- **The unmanaged expansion of cities poses a great threat to biodiversity;** which must be protected to stem the degradation of natural resources and to maintain and enrich ecosystem services that support urban living.
- Confronted by these interrelated challenges, it is clear that the cities of East Asia must strive for **alternatives to the historical urban development path** in many developed countries, which is based on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and a short-term perspective of development.
- In order to meet the goals of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and to achieve the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, the delivery of urban environmental services, such as in transportation, waste management, energy provision and water supply, should be implemented with strategies to achieve **pro-poor, low-carbon, environmentally-sound, resource-efficient** and **recovery-oriented** cities.
- Thus, the **formation of Environmentally Sustainable Cities (ESC) is a priority agenda in the region**, which should be pursued with the collaboration of all stakeholders in an integrated manner. ESC should be based on **an alternative model of urban development**, capable of securing economic, social and ecological progress in a sustainable and **inclusive** way, while being flexible in **respecting** each country and **city's unique history, traditions and culture**.

- **There are rich opportunities for cities of all sizes in East Asia to move towards ESC;** present in the emerging areas for public and private investment in environmental infrastructure and services, and in the accumulated wisdom, experience and knowledge of leading environmental cities, which may be harnessed and disseminated through inter-city cooperation and networks. Ultimately, **city governments are well-poised to take the lead in pursuing ESC;** taking advantage of their strategic institutional position and proximity to citizens, and further empowered through the trend of de-centralization in environmental governance, they can reform and integrate policies and services to achieve development towards economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- **There is a need to strengthen policies, regulations, guidelines and other support mechanisms by national governments, as well as to expand technical and financial support from the international society** to realize such rich opportunities, before they are undermined by the anticipated constraints resulting from irreversible environmental destruction.

II) INTRODUCTION

1. To implement the *Singapore Declaration on Climate Change, Energy and the Environment* adopted by the East Asia Summit (EAS) Leaders at their Third Summit in November 2007, the EAS Environment Ministers Meeting (EMM) was inaugurated in Hanoi, Viet Nam in October 2008, where the ministers supported a phased and prioritized approach to implementation of the Singapore Declaration and agreed that environmentally sustainable cities (ESC) to be an immediate priority area as an initial step of EAS environmental cooperation.

2. Following that, a High Level Seminar (HLS) on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (ESC) was held in the city of Jakarta, Indonesia, from 2nd to 4th of March 2010, as the first collaborative activity on fostering ESC under the framework of the EAS EMM. The HLS was jointly organized by the governments of Indonesia, Japan, Australia and Singapore, and co-chaired by Professor Emil Salim and Professor Ryokichi Hirono. High-level policy officials from EAS member countries², as well as representatives from cities in Asia and international organisations, donor agencies, academia, research institutes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), convened to discuss critical issues, review existing efforts, identify good and best practices, explore potential collaborative opportunities and to consolidate a set of concrete proposals and action plans on key focus areas pertaining to the agenda of ESC.³

III) KEY OUTPUTS

The HLS fostered extensive discussions through four Thematic Seminars, namely i) Cities and Resource Efficiency and 3Rs; ii) Cities and Biodiversity; iii) Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Urban Development; and iv) Low carbon and Low-Polluting Cities,⁴ as well as several Plenary Sessions. A total of eight local governments also presented their visions, targets and action plans during the HLS.⁵

Based on the outcomes of all sessions, the HLS arrived at and endorsed the following frameworks, key messages and recommendations to foster ESC in the

² EAS member countries that were represented include Australia, Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Laos, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, and Viet Nam. As for Cambodia, India and Malaysia, only representatives from selected local governments participated in the HLS.

³ The complete list of HLS participants can be found in Appendix 1.

⁴ Summaries of the Thematic Sessions are provided in Appendix 2.

⁵ The list of environmental commitments presented by local governments can be found in Appendix 5.

region, to be brought forward for the consideration of the Environmental Ministers and other delegates during the upcoming 2nd EAS EMM in Brunei Darussalam in 2010.

1. **Long-term city planning is the basis for realizing ESC.** Local governments should set **long-term visions** and **goals** for ESC in respect to local history, tradition, culture, nature, geography, industry and other features. Visions should be translated into a **roadmap** consisting of basic principles, **short-, medium- and long-term targets, policies** and **strategies** using an **integrated approach** which links various sectors including energy, transport, urban planning, landscaping, housing, as well as water resources, solid waste and wastewater management, in addition to climate change **mitigation** and **adaptation**. Self-analysis could be conducted by local governments to determine the existing **gaps and barriers** to implementation, as well as necessary forms of support. **Monitoring and evaluation** with **measurable indicators** should be performed to verify progress made on ESC goals.
2. **Prioritize** the development of ESC in the **national agenda**, in a way which minimizes the adverse impacts, and, if at all possible, **counters the current trends of rapid urbanization**, and provides an enabling environment to support the initiatives of cities, as well as **coordinate** the **relevant ministries and agencies** to produce concerted efforts to implement ESC, taking into account climate-related resource mobilization.
3. Also, **develop the capacity of local governments in ESC planning and implementation**. For example, an awards- and incentive-based East Asian **'Model Cities' programme** could be created to allow cities to propose their visions and plans to achieve ESC.

4. Essential elements for the achievement of ESCs include the following:

- a. Effective **governance** provides a conducive and enabling environment through i) **clear definition of responsibilities** of key stakeholders, particularly the division of roles between national and local governments; ii) **political will and leadership**, which are identified as underlying success factors for many successful cases presented in the HLS; iii) **effective participation** of all stakeholders, including the private sector and local communities; and iv) **cross-sectoral integration** among the relevant sectors that contribute towards ESC.

- b. Governments are confronted with a complex array of options and approaches, entailing the need for **knowledge management** initiatives to facilitate i) **knowledge and information sharing** through a commonly-accessible platform, such as a regional **clearinghouse and inter-city network**, especially on **tools** and **good practices** which can be adapted and **replicated** on a wider scale; ii) making use of **traditional knowledge** and **wisdom**; and iii) **objective** and **scientific** analysis of policies and approaches, including cost-benefit and life-cycle analysis which clearly demonstrate environmental costs and benefits on quantitative terms; and iv) the aggregation of **baseline environmental data** which is critical for informing and guiding the formulation of ESC policies programmes.

- c. Recognizing that **financial constraint** is a common challenge faced by many local governments in ESC initiatives, city governments should explore various modes of financing to mobilize resources and funds from various sources, starting from i) effective enforcement of the current **taxation policies** and programmes; ii) encouraging the introduction of innovative financing mechanisms, such as **fee- and incentive-based**

models in the provision of public services which would ensure the sustainability of urban facilities and amenities; iii) fostering **a favourable investment climate** by providing suitable regulatory frameworks and policies, and then involving the **private sector** in ESC initiatives through **public-private partnerships**; iv) strengthening the local financial base through the **increased allocation of revenue from the central government**, matching the expanded range of responsibilities devolved to the local governments; and v) **encouraging private sector investments** in the establishment of environmentally-friendly urban infrastructure, products and services towards realizing a **green economy**.

d. **Meaningful participation of communities** is an integral factor to promote the success of ESC efforts, particularly by: i) involving communities, including the **informal sector**, in planning, decision-making processes, implementation and monitoring of ESC-related activities; ii) actively involving all levels of society in **community-based initiatives** to cultivate **a sense of ownership** that may ensure the longevity of ESC policies and projects; iii) providing extensive **environmental education opportunities** to various sectors to raise awareness for ESC policies and approaches and encourage active participation in relevant events and opportunities.

5. While **local governments shall be responsible for taking the lead** in implementing ESC, cities need **support from their national governments**, while also tapping into a range of **tools and resources offered by international stakeholders** such as regional organizations, donor agencies, through joint initiatives in knowledge sharing and capacity building.

- a. Governments should also actively seek collaboration opportunities with **development partners**,⁶ such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- b. Local and foreign **research institutes** and **universities** can be engaged to provide research capacity in assisting cities in designing ESC policies and programmes, such as those proposed by Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and supported by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) and Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).
- c. Governments could **foster links** with existing **major inter-city networks**,⁷ including Asian City Network for Environmental Improvement (renewed form of Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment), CITYNET (the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements), ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia), and others, for information sharing through joining both the events and programmes organized by each organization, as well as those jointly-

⁶ Summary of Activities Promoted by International Organizations and Programmes is found in Appendix 3.

⁷ Summary of Activities Conducted by International and Regional Networks is found in Appendix 4.

coordinated by CAI-Asia and Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA).

- d. **ASEAN-related initiatives**, such as the ongoing joint programmes by GTZ, Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) and USAID with ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC), ASEAN Initiatives on ESC, and 'Cool ASEAN, Green Capitals Initiative', and the Network of East Asian Think-Tanks Working Group on the Environment (NEAT/WGE) should be further promoted and developed.
- e. An '**association/league of local governments**', which is empowered with suitable resources, may be set up in each EAS country, with the support of national governments and other organizations to facilitate information sharing between local governments in a country.
- f. The outputs of the HLS, including the Chair's Summary, could be shared at the relevant events and meetings, such as the World Cities Summit in Singapore in June 2010, and the 6th Ministerial Conference on the Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific in Kazakhstan in September 2010, where further constructive inputs could be expected.

IV) RECOMMENDATIONS

The HLS agreed that the key outputs and following recommendations in the Chair's Summary will be presented to the 2nd EAS EMM in 2010 in Brunei Darussalam for the Ministers' consideration, together with the progress of the roadmap and details of specific activities mentioned in the following paragraph 4.

1. Governments are requested to strongly consider supporting activities, programmes and ongoing initiatives of development partners, inter-city networks and local governments towards realizing ESC, and to encourage all stakeholders to come up with more **concerted regional efforts** to mainstream ESC in synergy with the development agenda in East Asia. The resources and agenda of the informal sector should be given a greater role.
 2. Governments are also encouraged to further intensify efforts in **mainstreaming ESC** in their respective development strategy, as well as at the EAS level, utilizing the innovative tools and approaches highlighted in the HLS.
 3. The HLS suggested that **a broad roadmap** towards ESC be formulated under the framework of the EAS EMM, reflecting the key outputs of the HLS, including policy options and instruments, technology, financing options, knowledge management and stakeholders' participation.
 4. The HLS also suggested the following activities, to be conducted in collaboration with development partners, including international organizations, for further elaboration at future meetings:
 - i. An East Asian 'Model Cities' Initiative
 - ii. A clearinghouse for ESC-related data and information
 - iii. A Public and Private Sector Forum on ESC
 - iv. ESC Capacity Building Programme
 - v. EAS ESC Awards based on performance indicators
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- Appendix 1 List of participants of the HLS
- Appendix 2 Summary of Thematic Sessions A, B, C and D
- Appendix 3 Summary of Activities Promoted by International Organizations and Programmes
- Appendix 4 Summary of Activities Conducted by International and Regional Networks
- Appendix 5 Environmental Commitments Expressed by Local Governments