



COP17/CMP7
 UNITED NATIONS
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 DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Cities and Climate Change

UN system-wide response to climate change

Under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) brings together 29 UN system organizations to jointly support Member States in meeting global challenges.

In 2007, the CEB adopted the Climate Change Actions Framework, a joint action-oriented approach in line with the decisions of the UNFCCC Parties. The UN system supports Member States in implementing their commitments and in responding to the emerging challenges.

At COP 17 / CMP 7, the UN system is presenting its ongoing work and practical solutions and tools at side events, exhibits and by sharing a joint package with thematic information.

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www.unsceb.org/ceb/priorities/climate-change/

The effects of urbanization and climate change are converging in dangerous ways that seriously threaten the world's environmental, economic and social well-being.

Millions of the urban poor already live in low-lying, flood-prone areas, or cling to precarious hillside settlements at risk of landslides. Climate change, coupled with ongoing rapid urbanization and inadequate urban management capacity, will make many of those existing problems worse. The urban poor in developing countries thus are among the populations that are most vulnerable to climate change.

Cities also emit large quantities of greenhouse gases. Local action is indispensable for the realization of national climate change commitments agreed through international negotiations.

Over the past few years, cities have attracted more attention on the international and national stages. Policy-makers are realizing that global warming and its effects can be best addressed only when local authorities are empowered to act in ways that are broadly aligned with global and national priorities for addressing climate change.

Cities are beginning to address the challenge of climate change. Local authorities are assessing risks and acting to increase community resilience and climate-proof key facilities. At the same time cities are setting targets for reducing their emissions and coming up with innovative strategies to meet those goals. A number of mature technologies exist that can reduce GHG emissions in cities in a cost-effective manner. But to achieve maximum results cities need partners that empower them to take effective action.

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

Climate Change Action Framework

Focus (left) and Cross-Cutting Areas (right) have been identified in pursuance of the broader mandates and capacities in the UN system (with corresponding convening agencies) to ensure better coordination and cooperation for concrete deliverables:

Adaptation
 Technology transfer
 Forestry and Agriculture
 Financing mitigation and adaptation action
 Capacity-building

Climate knowledge; science, assessment, monitoring and early warning
 Supporting global, regional and national action
 Public awareness-raising
 Social Dimensions of Climate Change

Cities and Climate Change

Objectives

In the area of cities and climate change, the key objectives are:

- To promote active climate change collaboration of local governments and their associations in global, regional and national networks;
- To enhance policy dialogue so that the urban dimension of climate change is firmly established on the agenda;
- To foster the implementation of awareness, education, and capacity building strategies.

The UN Responds

Recognizing the urgency to enhance implementation at the local level, the UN system is assisting cities with the following responses:

- Providing tools to assess greenhouse gas emissions;
- Undertaking risk assessments
- Encouraging cities to adopt measures to enhance urban resilience;
- Supporting data collection on population and environment linkages;
- Strengthening the capacities of local authorities to integrate climate change into existing planning, budgeting and approval processes;

- Assisting in developing local adaptation plans;
- Promoting urban patterns for sustainable development towards a green economy;
- Facilitating policy dialogue between national and local governments;
- Offering training, capacity building and peer learning by sharing lessons of experience;
- Promoting Information and Communication Technologies to support climate action;
- Opening channels for accessing finance at local level.

Benefits

Many actions against climate change have additional benefits. Those that increase climate change preparedness and reduce greenhouse gas emissions are called 'no regrets' actions or policies.

Local level actions will only make a difference when many local and national governments, households and industry act together. Likewise, the city may only benefit from climate change preparedness years from now such as when a flood plan comes into action long after being devised. While the immediate focus ought to be on the 'no regrets actions' that bring medium-term benefits to the city, leaders must consider long-term issues when making policies today.

Moving forward

As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) points out: "The two major forms of climate risk management are: (1) the mitigation of climate change through the abatement of greenhouse gas emissions and GHG sequestration; and (2) adaptation to the consequences of a changing climate". Cities and their local governments have an important role to play in both areas.

Cities can help to mitigate climate change by reducing the emission of greenhouse gases within their jurisdictions. Already hundreds of cities have committed themselves to reducing their annual GHG emissions, or meeting other targets for more sustainable urban development.

Cities can also begin to adapt to the impacts of climate change via effective urban management. Planning and land use controls can prevent people from building in zones at risk of flooding and landslides. Guidelines and regulations can increase resiliency. Likewise governments can design infrastructure so that it is climate-proof.

The Durban Local Government Convention: adapting to a changing climate, organized by ICLEI, the South Africa Local Government Association and the Department of Environmental Affairs of the Republic of South Africa will be held from 2-4 December 2011, in parallel to the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC.

The UN system is assisting cities through a wide range of agencies, including UN-HABITAT, UNEP, UNESCO, ITU, UNITAR, UNFPA, UNDP, ISDR, UNECE, and the World Bank.

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