ASIA-EUROPE ENVIRONMENT FORUM 5TH ROUNDTABLE

“Achieving Urban Sustainability: Integrated Environmental Management”

28-30 November | Shenzhen, China

CONCEPT PAPER

SUMMARY

A roundtable discussion among 40 specially-invited participants from the countries of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) will be held over 2 days in Shenzhen, China. The roundtable will focus on the following issues relevant to integrated urban management:

1. What has been done by Asian and European governments with respect to the management of urban areas? Is there a trend of convergence in dealing with urban management issues?

2. Given the numerous initiatives at both international and regional level, how can Asian and European governments strengthen cooperation and exchange best practices in managing their urban spaces better?

3. How can Asia and Europe include a greater participation from stakeholders in order to propose an overall practical framework for achieving urban sustainability through integrated urban management and what are the types of policy mechanisms that can be used?

This roundtable is part of the Asia-Europe Environment Forum series; co-organised by the ASEF, the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), the Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES) the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia (SENSA).

BACKGROUND

Urban Management

Urban areas are the principal locations for services, trade, production, consumption and habitat. They host a concentration of activities and population. By the year 2015 nearly 60 percent of the world’s population will make cities their home. With further urban population growth expected in both Asia and Europe, an integrated approach to sustainable urban management becomes an important and pressing issue that needs to be addressed if the overall quality of environment and human health are to be improved.

Urban centres in both Asia and Europe host trading markets and production venues that contribute directly to the wealth of countries. The urban infrastructure is a key factor to local and foreign investments. Urban planning has visible impacts on the well-being of the population. Urban areas are home to numerous people with increasingly different backgrounds and professions.
What they do have in common is an ever increasing demand for consumption of land, water, energy and other natural resources, which are of vital importance to urban sustainability. Additionally, what the cities consume they equally discard. Waste management is a serious issue that plagues urban cities, particularly in developing countries. It is therefore important to address issues in integrated urban management for sustainability which would have a direct impact on socio-economic development.

Increasingly, urban management requires an integrated approach to solving complex issues ranging from climate change and energy efficiency at global level to transport and infrastructure at local level. Each of the themes presents a new dimension to urban management. It is therefore essential that cities and institutions involved in managing urban spaces learn as much as possible about the variety of tools and approaches. An integrated approach would enable stakeholders to holistically confront the various dimensions of urban management. Themes such land-use, energy efficiency, climate change, urban air quality, urban water pollution and transport are intrinsically intertwined and they need to be incorporated into the general framework of urban management.

Cities in coastal settings face problems that might become familiar to other cities. Faced with physical land constraints and climate change threats, they could serve as examples on how to effectively manage urban spaces in a systematic integrated manner.

Beyond looking at the wide thematic concerns under urban management, it is also important to support the various forms of partnerships. Local governments and institutions stand to benefit from cooperation with both the civil society and private sector. Drawing on synergies between their work, partners in such an alliance can obtain a greater multiplier effect.

**International Initiatives**

Goal 7 of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals focuses on the need to ensure environmental sustainability. Deteriorating quality of urban air, declining water resources in terms of quality and quantity, overloading of wastes due to unsustainable lifestyles and consumption, loss of biodiversity, diminishing coastal resources, and exposure to hazardous chemicals and wastes are just some of the factors that increase environmental stress in urban areas. There have been some initiatives that are centred on thematic areas of sustainable urbanisation.

Since the Local Government Session at the World Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa (August 2002), local government leaders from around the world, as well as representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-HABITAT and the World Health Organization (WHO), have been working with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in launching Local Action 21 as the next phase of Local Agenda 21 (LA21). This is just one example of how local governments are working with one another to achieve the aims set out under larger international goals.
Regional initiatives such as the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment approach the problem by working in close cooperation with city authorities, the sharing of experiences and best practices. The Clean Air Initiative of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), for example, consists of a partnership programme that enables governments to share information on urban air quality management.

As mentioned, coastal cities provide an interesting example for other cities. Networks like the (PEMSEA) collaborate and provide support for integrated coastal management, sharing tools on with local government units on harmonising economic development with sustainable environmental management of coastal and marine areas.

Efforts should also be made in order to fit local and international initiatives in order to provide synergy and avoid duplication. For example, more should be done to encourage eco-efficiency initiatives such as UNESCAP’s “Eco-efficient and Sustainable Urban Infrastructure Development in Asia and Latin America” which will be implemented in 2008/2009 together with UN-ECLAC and UN-Habitat.

It is essential that more opportunities are provided so that stakeholders and networks can collaborate further to intensify the development, transfer and exchange of the substantive knowledge on various aspects of urban management. Local governments and stakeholders should work to exchange and learn more about technical and advisory services in order to influence policy changes at local and national level.

The Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) is the main platform for multistakeholder policy dialogue on sustainable development issues between Asia and Europe that has steadily gained recognition among civil society (which is its primary constituency), the business community as well as among governments particularly through the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process.

ASEM is a political process of dialogue and co-operation between the European Union (EU) and East Asia¹, along three pillars: political (the inter-governmental, official dialogue); economic (trade, investment, involving the business sector) and socio cultural (which includes the Asia-Europe Foundation as the process’s outreach to civil society).

In order to encourage the sharing of information and experience on integrated urban management practices in ASEM countries, the ENVforum will organise the ENVforum 5th Roundtable in Shenzhen, China in collaboration with the Research Centre for Urban Development and the Environment, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and City Development Centre of Shenzhen Municipality.

¹ ASEM member are: Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Myanmar, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Vietnam and the European Commission. The recent ASEM Helsinki Summit welcomes Bulgaria, India, Mongolia, Pakistan, Romania and the ASEAN Secretariat.
OBJECTIVES

The overarching objective of the roundtable is the sharing of information and experiences on integrated urban management practices in ASEM countries with the aim to generate practical policy recommendations for central and local governments as well as regional/international networks supportive and relevant to the sustainable urban management.

The specific objectives of the roundtable are

(i) to share experiences on integrated urban management practices in Europe and Asia;
(ii) to identify potential areas for Asia-Europe cooperation in global and regional urban sustainable development, in particular in relation to land use planning, energy, climate change mitigation; water supply, solid waste management and pollution control;
(iii) to obtain better understanding of advanced urban sustainability management techniques through open scenarios building techniques; and
(iv) to promote networking among participants to foster future cooperation opportunities in the field of sustainable urban management and development.

PARTICIPANTS

Approximately 40 high-level participants and speakers representing all 38 ASEM countries from the research/academia, civil society, industries and governments involved in various aspects of the urban management will be invited, particularly those involved in the following activities:

a. Research/Academia
b. Civil Society
c. Industry
d. Government

In particular, the meeting targets representatives from existing networks such as

- International Union of Local Authorities (IULA)
- European Green Cities Network (EGCN)
- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) – Local Governments for Sustainability Network
- International Association of Public Transport (UITP)
- Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia) Center
- Initiatives of the Asian Development Bank, UN Habitat, UNDP
- ASEAN Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Cities
- “Eco-efficient and Sustainable Urban Infrastructure Development in Asia and Latin America”, UNESCAP and UN-HABITAT
- NGOs working on service provision, renewable energy initiatives, etc.

The roundtable will consist of two sections, one workshop introducing stakeholders to a tool for exploring policymaking using scenario building
techniques while the other will be a roundtable with presentations and discussions.

I. Roundtable discussion
The roundtable session will involve presentation papers and discussion on selected issues in urban management. It will also facilitate the sharing of relevant experiences and lesson learning.

Ample time will be made available to participants to interact and share viewpoints. Participants are encouraged to submit papers and materials related to their activities in advance of October in order for the papers to be circulated to all participants.

II. Workshop
This workshop will target a small group of representatives from the stakeholders, providing them with a brief look at the Scenario building methodology. This methodology presents future scenarios and data; allowing decision makers to “reverse engineer” the scenarios. By doing so, decision makers can look not only at trends but also, trend discontinuity and surprises. For example, the approach examines scenarios that may not seem probable given current trends. Yet those scenarios may occur because of unexpected incidents, for example international security incidents or even discovery of new resources, triggering changes in trends. As such, the approach allows decision makers to test and re-examine the robustness of their policy instruments.

The approach is a more holistic one because it takes into account various socio-politico-economics variables as well as the role of the various stakeholders such as industry and civil society.

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Co-organisers

Asia-Europe Foundation
Hanns Seidel Foundation
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
United Nations Environment Programme
Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia

With

Research Centre for Sustainable Development, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)
And
City Development Research Centre of Shenzhen Municipality

Date, Venue

Four Points by Sheraton Shenzhen
28-30 November 2007
Shenzhen, China