

DIALOGUE SESSION

Cities under climate change



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The International Scientific Conference *Our Common Future under Climate Change* took place at UNESCO and UPMC (Paris) in July 2015. This four-day conference was the largest forum for the scientific community to come together ahead of the 21st UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP21) hosted by France in December 2015 (Paris Climat 2015). Building on the results of IPCC 5th Assessment Report (AR5), the Conference addressed key issues concerning climate change in the broader context of global change. The conference was a major opportunity for scientists, stakeholders and the larger public, to take stock of existing knowledge, explore and identify innovative solutions, discuss them, and prepare for an ambitious post 2015 climate governance regime. To strengthen the dialogue between scientists and the actors involved in the fight against climate change and to feed the future agenda of research, the Conference also offered a venue for scientists, policy-makers, businesses and NGOs to dialogue about specific topics.

www.commonfuture-paris2015.org

The World summit on Climate & Territories hosted in Lyon 1- 2 July 2015 gathered non-state actors to put pressure on climate negotiations, noting : among the 9 Major Groups which are recognized by the United Nations in International Negotiations, “Scientists” are set apart from others as not delivering political messages.

Non state actors want to weigh in climate change negotiations

All of these networks together represent 2/3 of the inhabitants of the world: this strengthens the impact of the general declaration: if we do not have a territorial approach, it's impossible to succeed. The declaration aims to position territorial action at the heart of the response to climate challenge. It clearly insists on the need for a collaborative approach between local and national authorities and on the fact that public policies and non-state actors' measures must be better articulated, both within and beyond the international negotiations.

The role of the cities' platform

Data and figures are crucial; that's why there are several reporting platforms, such as the carbon Climate Registry (cCR), which is the world's leading reporting platform to enhance transparency, accountability and credibility of climate action by local and subnational

KEY POINTS

- Cities are at the heart of the response to climate challenge.
- On the eve of the COP21, all the non-state stakeholders realize they have a role to play. Scientific community is awaited for science based options whereas local governments want to weigh on the negotiations.
- Indeed, both local approach and national Government to climate action are necessary: the importance of financing for territorial initiatives was strongly emphasized at the World summit on Climate & Territories hosted in Lyon 1- 2 July 2015.
- The non-state actors' platform should request progress in positive steps towards establishment of a price on carbon.

governments. It is designated as the central repository of the Compact of Mayors launched at the Climate Summit 2014. Also, the Covenant of Mayors is a European movement involving local and regional authorities, voluntarily committing to increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources in their territories.

The request at COP-21 is for the UNFCCC to grant observer status to this non-state actors platform and to take into consideration a set of goals/targets/concrete steps mayors want to see come out of Paris. This platform could (should) be established as an advocacy & lobbying group. The 'commonwealth of mayors' effectively gives agency within the negotiating process to local level governance. Cities are at once the locus and nexus of convergence in two emerging and determinant global trends – firstly, humanity is rapidly becoming a predominantly urban species on the planet (we have passed the 50% mark of urban population; to establish this in objective terms, use UN-Habitat's latest or IPCC's latest statistics on percentage of urban, and rate of growth in small/med/large cities, etc.) which means cities are generative – contributing to GHGs, and secondly, by virtue of being located precisely where climate hazards are greatest (river basins, coastal zones, etc.) cities represent 'the perfect storm' of growing climate risks.

So cities must both mitigate and adapt to avoid massive intensification of human suffering, poverty, and disasters that are a direct consequence of population & climate risk trends converging in urban settlements. At the same time cities represent the engines of economic growth whereby countries can rise out of poverty, aspire to and open equitable opportunity for prosperity for all, incubate innovation and accelerate the depth and breadth of social and technological change that offer the greatest 'capacity to adapt'.

Tackling climate change requires cross-sectoral collaboration. That is the reason why the French Prime minister asked to design a resource space on the topic of sustainable cities. The French

Institute for the sustainable city should bring the agencies and all public institutions dealing with energy, mobility, housing, but also local authorities, businesses, as well as academic, research and civil society all together to address precisely this issue : to examine new patterns of decision-making, design, production, operational management and use of the sustainable city.

This new collaborative space can serve as a knowledge-broker to mobilize expertise not only to identify legal or technical barriers to innovation, but also to collectively find openings and accelerate the implementation of ambitious projects, and secure the means for implementation of new tools and methodologies.

Carbon price

The situation calls for interdisciplinary collaboration to bridge the gap between scientists and policy making. What is at stake is the impact of the scientific community in the real world. The integration of 'best available science' is the aim of the Summary for Policymakers – it should target municipal as well as national governance. The non-state actors platform should request progress in positive steps towards establishment of a price on carbon, and an expanded and progressively accessible carbon market. This is needed so that cities can leverage forward planning with a consistent and universal decarbonizing goal. It is imperative to frame the goal and steps to achieve it in order to allow for and to guide planning & investments that make sense today and will not result in maladaptation with attendant 'externalized' (postponed or transferred to the poor and vulnerable) social and environmental costs, and/or wasteful and costly future retrofitting and reconfiguration of urban space, systems and infrastructure.

Make the case for a price on carbon. This is critical in terms of enabling a 're-set' mechanism for planning, policy and investment. The goal of a price on carbon is imperative to enable cities to plan for the longer-range future – and even more so under conditions of deep uncertainty in which the state of

that future is unknown. The future is deeply uncertain insofar as the magnitude of climate shocks we will have to contend with are directly proportional to the degree to which we achieve a ramping up in Paris, i.e. the degree to which a post-Paris regime effects a change in our global trajectory.

North-South & local-national

Cities are represented by the dynamic dialectic of governments & civil society – the push and pull of popular demand and policy response - whereby policy vision which can also cultivate participation and response to better shape and push policy. There is a need for coherence in benchmarking across global cities in retrofitting on the one hand and developing on the other – it will always be a combination, whether in the North or South context. There is no North or South method – the aim is policy coherence to enable decentralized and diverse forms of governance to advance in their own ways and to benefit from sharing across the platform the proliferation of methods and approaches, problems and solutions that enable decision-making informed by best available science as well as practical experience, so that cities operate as entities composed of government + civil society; with the caveat that civil society is increasingly knowledgeable and engaged in planning and acting today, in a way that is resilient to the climate impacts of the longer-term future.

The platform should thus assert city representation as both civil and government, under umbrella principles of being participative, inclusive, actively enabling agency and participation of the marginalized and the most vulnerable parts of the population. The purpose and aim of such a platform is to articulate an evolving vision, informed by the best available science, to advance in coherence and leverage the power of progressive policy, investment and incentives that are locally generated but collectively embraced. Cities can accelerate transformative change in developing and retrofitting systems across energy, water & sanitation, health, agriculture. For example locally appropriate sustainable energy

systems and strategies, integrated water resource systems management & urban agriculture are subset or derivative policy tracks that will need to be further elaborated.

The declaration for COP-21 should set the stage for and may already anticipate a post-Paris process of deeper articulation of sectoral and perhaps more importantly integrative cross-sectoral aims and objectives that may be supported with policy and investment that is forward-looking and informed by best-available science. Broadly the democratization of science, both through uptake in enlightened flexible and forward-looking policy, planning and investment as well as the role and responsibility of government and civil society organisations to work together in enabling access and agency will strengthen the capacity to participate in decision-making and action that progressively advances (institutionalised in ways of working) the expansion of collective intelligence and participation in decarbonizing as the path to socially equitable and environmentally sustainable development.

There can indeed be no prospect of prosperity and well-being, of peace and security, of access and agency for all without the full embrace of decarbonizing as a fundamental pillar of climate-resilient development. This universal contextual principle applies as the base framework for planning, policy and investment in North and South alike.

Financing the transition

The importance of financing for territorial initiatives was strongly emphasized: create new mechanisms that would be easily or directly accessible by local governments to increase the scope and impact of actions: guarantee facilities, green bonds, third party financing, internalization of carbon costs in the economy are noted in the final declaration. Evidence based options are still sought to tackle climate-fatalism: scientists should articulate that there is a way to succeed and everybody has a role to play.



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