



Fourth Municipal Leaders Summit on Climate Change

5-7 December 2005
Montréal, Canada

Campaign against climate change goes down to municipality level

A short report on the Fourth Municipal Leaders Summit on Climate Change

by Intikhab Amir, Dawn, Peshawar / Pakistan
InWent – Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung
(Capacity Building International, Germany)

www.inwent.org/themen_reg/iij/reports/06804/index.en.shtml#a10



Montréal Summit Secretariat

ICLEI ♦ City Hall ♦ West Tower, 16th Floor ♦ 100 Queen Street West ♦ Toronto, Ontario ♦ M5H 2N2 Canada
Tel. +1-416/392-1390 ♦ Fax +1-416/392-1478 ♦ montreal.summit@iclei.org ♦ www.iclei.org/montrealsummit

Climate Change Convention / COP 11 Montreal, Canada, November 28 - December 09, 2005
Reports

Campaign against climate change goes down to municipality level

by Intikhab Amir, Dawn, Peshawar / Pakistan

With their national governments finding it difficult to hammer out a strategy to lower green house gas emissions after 2012, municipal leaders and local government representatives gathered from across the world on the sidelines of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. They have resolved to protect people of their cities from the adverse effects of global warming by undertaking climate change mitigation measures.

More than 330 municipal leaders and representatives of local governments from some 40 countries of Europe, Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America and North America committed themselves to advancing climate change mitigation and adaptation within the municipal sector and developing further partnerships between local governments and the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

“We convened to intervene,” said Gerald Tremblay, Mayor of Montreal and a member of the leadership group of the World Mayors Council on Climate Change formed in June last to counter global warming through mutual cooperation of local government leaders around the world. Municipal leaders, he said at a press conference following the three day summit on Thursday, accompanied the UN climate negotiations to ensure that local governments were heard. “Cities are part of the problem, so they must be part of the solution,” he said.

With more than 50 percent of the world’s population living in cities, municipalities had a greater role to play to mitigate global warming through their decisions on land use, zoning, traffic management, building codes and many other activities, as local governments can affect the energy intensity of their communities, their representatives said.

They recognized that more severe and extreme weather events necessitate urgent action to ensure adequate mitigation and adaptation measures to be taken to protect public health, strengthen infrastructure, apply appropriate urban and regional development plans and advance economic development.

The Mayors sought recognition by the Conference of the Parties for actions they have implemented and are continuing to reduce greenhouse gas emission.

“To this end, we request from the UNFCCC an allocation be granted to all major groups to strengthen and enhance an annual input process specific to local governments prior to future COP/MOP meetings,” said the mayors in their declaration adopted at the summit.

The fact that Greg Nickles, Mayor of Seattle, USA, who represents the Association of 188 mayors of the United States, the deputy mayor of London, Ms Nicky Gavron and lady mayor Baerbel Dieckmann of Bonn also attended the summit gave strength to representatives of local governments from the developing countries.

Describing it as a dynamic alliance of municipal leaders spearheading a political movement for progressive climate policies, Baerbel Dieckmann expressed the hope that the World Mayors Council would serve as a climate and sustainability think tank to share solutions and develop recommendations to resolve local problems causing environmental degradation and adding to global warming.

However, prospects for an effective agreement for post 2012 when the Kyoto protocol comes to an end appear far off as negotiations at the Palais de Congress conference site for adopting the future course were impeded by the US position.

The Montreal conference has two main parts: one involves all the countries - including the U.S. - that signed the original framework. The other includes only those that ratified the protocol. In the protocol sessions, the U.S is only an observer.

The protocol set out a first round of targets for cuts to be achieved by the end of 2012. The main task of the Montreal conference is to launch negotiations on what will follow that first phase. Senior U.S. climate negotiator Harlan Watson continued to insist that the United States would never accept mandatory targets for cutting emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that are warming the atmosphere.

The United States signed the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It also accepted the 1997 Kyoto protocol, which imposed mandatory targets on 40 "developed" countries. But President George W. Bush backed out in 2001.

“Our water is literally disappearing while the White House waits and wonders. Science is clear and the time to act is now,” said Greg Nickles, Mayor of Seattle, at the World Mayors Summit. “Across the United States, 188 Mayors representing over 40 million Americans have joined in pledging to cut greenhouse gasses. That has sent a powerful message to the rest of the world that people in this country are deeply concerned about global warming and willing to act”.

As the outcome of their three-day deliberations at Montreal, municipal leaders adopted a declaration, which puts forth a heavy agenda for the council’s member cities to effectively cope up with the issue of warming of the earth through joint cooperation and partnership among municipalities and with their national governments.

Acknowledging the differential access to resources between cities in developed and developing countries, the mayors and representatives of local governments have committed to achieve emission reduction target of 30 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050 based on 1990 level. In their effort to achieve the targets, they committed themselves to minimizing dependence on fossil fuel energy through shifting to sustainable land use that encourages public transit, diminishes the reliance on vehicular transport and single occupancy vehicles and improve energy efficiency.

The summit also committed itself to advancing partnerships and collaboration with national and sub-national governments, non-governmental organizations, corporate and industrial sectors as well as community groups in order to multiply reduction potential.

In a likely outcome of the summit, local governments, at least, in the developed countries would assume a major climate change mitigation role as mayors ask UNFCCC for a greater role in carbon credit exchange mechanism and urged their national governments to allocate 'more financial resources with less bureaucratic impediments', as the mayor of Montreal put it, to combat climate change.