



APEC Sustainable Cities: Agenda for Cooperation 6.9.97

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APEC Sustainable Cities: Agenda for Cooperation

Toronto, Canada - June 9-11, 1997

Promoting rapid economic growth that ensures a healthy environment and improves the quality of life of our citizens is a fundamental challenge.

APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration: From Vision to Action
Subic Bay, Philippines; November 1996

Our aim is to facilitate a broad based societal change in thinking throughout the APEC economies, which embraces the sustainability of cities as a fundamental concept for human prosperity and environmental health.

APEC Ministers Responsible for the Environment Toronto, Canada; June, 1997

Context

As global society moves into the 21st century, changes are occurring at an increasingly rapid rate, challenging all segments of society to respond through modification of their everyday behaviours and through adaptation to new conditions. The impact of these changes on human and natural systems will be felt unevenly throughout the world. Urban areas of heavily concentrated population and inadequate infrastructure will be among the most highly affected regions. The complexity and interrelated character of the issues facing cities is straining the capacity of our governance structures. The crucial question, then, is how to move beyond reactive coping strategies to preserve and enhance the quality of life and economic productivity of major cities.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region accounts for a large proportion of the world's economic output. The vast majority of that economic activity is generated in cities; economic growth derives from productive cities functioning well. Cities go beyond roads, bricks and mortar. Cities are defined by the people who inhabit them; the people who drive our economic progress and social change. Healthy cities are essential, to facilitate social interaction, the production and exchange of goods and services, and access to diverse opportunities for economic advancement, education, and enjoyment.

In 15 years, the proportion of the APEC region's population living in cities will have grown to over 70%. This expanding urban population and the rapid economic growth in many APEC cities must be balanced against the health of local residents and ecosystems to ensure sustainable prosperity. As a result, urban areas are experiencing a significant transformation through explosive expansion and redevelopment. Such rapid urbanization poses interrelated environmental, social, and economic challenges to APEC cities.

With its growing spirit of community and the combined efforts of the public and private sectors, APEC is uniquely positioned to employ the necessary resources, knowledge, technologies and political will that is required to address the sustainability of cities throughout the region. This will involve a harmonization of economic prosperity with environmental and social considerations. Efforts towards this harmonization are currently underway as demonstrated by initiatives in such sectors as transportation, energy, and trade. APEC Ministers responsible for the Environment will continue to take a leading role in addressing the environmental component of sustainable urbanization.

Much has already been accomplished to address the urgency of sustainable urbanization. The global community is moving towards implementation of commitments, in light of strong, globally accepted scientific rationale. The 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development identified broad principles on sustainable development, while the Vision Statement and Framework of Principles of the 1994 APEC Environment Ministerial Meeting in Vancouver, Canada outlined the common environmental challenges facing APEC economies. The work of Habitat II in Istanbul, 1996 and the Declaration and Action Programme of the July 1996 APEC Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Development in Manila, Philippines have focused attention on sustainable cities. The Agenda for Cooperation builds upon this work, defining the program of action for APEC economies.

An APEC Approach to Sustainable Cities

Within this context a cooperative approach to sustainable urbanization seeks a fine balance among cultural, social, natural, political, and economic systems. Only through agreement on common values can effective partnerships with governments and key stakeholders in urban civil societies be encouraged, built, and maintained. The active participation of citizens in concert with the private sector and local authorities is paramount, today and over the long term. The creation of an enabling environment for the exchange of knowledge and goods between key partners is also essential.

Acknowledgment of the diversity of APEC members will allow maximum flexibility in implementation, reflective of member economies' local ecosystems and unique situations. A comprehensive approach to addressing individual needs also requires taking preemptive actions and remediation in urban areas of all sizes. Within the broader framework of all APEC economies the principle of progress requires that, where appropriate, new initiatives build upon, and reinforce, existing regional/global commitments.

Sharing will be crucial to success. APEC economies will benefit from close collaboration and from encouragement of joint public/private initiatives to innovatively finance sustainable urbanization

activities. A collective APEC approach to sustainable cities provides momentum, reinforces commitment, and builds individual capacity. To complement this approach and realize the objectives of the Agenda requires a mutual acceptance of basic environmental principles.

Environmental Basics for Sustainable Cities

Envisioning sustainable cities asks that we rethink the role of environment in a more integrated manner. A common understanding and acceptance of fundamental environmental and human functions is required in order for member economies to improve the urban quality of life for all citizens and make APEC prosperity sustainable.

Healthy natural systems are fundamental requirements. Essential environmental functions include natural filtration systems (soils, plants, trees), biodiversity of plant and animal life, and an uninterrupted flow of nutrients. Together, these functions provide the crucible for human survival, innovation, and prosperity. Degradation of any environmental function through unconscious human negligence weakens the very systems needed to sustain our societies, individually and collectively.

Necessary human functions include the effective utilization of waste; provision of safe drinking water; attention to sanitary practices at both individual and urban scales; efficient urban use of land and management of natural resources; efficient means of movement; sustainable consumption and production of energy; and other basic services and facilities, including shelter. Systems of governance must engage local and regional stakeholders to cooperatively guide urbanization. Such systems require concerted preventive and mitigative approaches to address unproductive activities (i.e. release of harmful levels of contaminants into air, water, and soils), reduce vulnerability, and increase resilience to natural and economic shocks. Moreover, the massive infrastructure development required in the APEC region must be guided by social, economic, and environmental considerations.

The dominant tendency to consider the environment as one more consideration in the pursuit of human progress represents a flaw in our thinking. To place humanity outside of the natural setting upon which we are dependent is incorrect and dangerous. The environment is not a backdrop for human growth and economic development, but an essential, integral component of our survival. Cities must be seen as a subsystem of the ecosphere, not separate from it. Rethinking our perception of cities will be difficult and resisted on many fronts, and yet is necessary for APEC economies to prosper.

In addition, the web of dynamic linkages between transportation, food, energy, environment, population, and economic growth demonstrates the highly connective character of environmental and human functions of urban regions that must be carefully considered to ensure sustainability. Such challenges require an assessment and evaluation of barriers.

Barriers to Achieving Sustainable Cities

Despite numerous global, regional, and local activities that address the complex, interrelated issues of sustainable urbanization, significant barriers still stand in the way of progress. Barriers that appear at micro and macro levels in all APEC economies require formal identification and demand constructive attention. Five salient barriers have been initially selected as focal points for discussion.

First, knowledge is not being effectively utilized. Current efforts to make cities sustainable seldom take advantage of all available knowledge. They are frequently neither transdisciplinary nor innovative. These limitations in the application of knowledge are compounded by an inadequate

exchange of experiences and applied skills.

Second, there is a perception that disincentives to investment hinder public and private support for the financial infrastructure expenditures and community-based projects required to sustain APEC's growing cities. Therefore, there is a need to review work examining areas such as the nature of economies' regulations, investment environments, funding sources, and return on private expenditures, all within the context of sustainable cities.

Third, a separation of agendas often arises between public and private sectors, and among various levels of government. Additionally, while the interdependent nature of sustainable development components (social, economic, and environmental) is recognized, too often a disciplinary tendency or a sectoral focus becomes an expedient approach. Such an approach undermines our ability to work together.

Fourth, the involvement of individuals remains untapped, and yet it is a crucial component for progress towards sustainable APEC cities. Meaningful involvement of community voices and those most affected by environmental policies and practices has been difficult to achieve, limited in scope, and marginally reflected in governmental programs.

Finally, the needs of the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of the population are not adequately addressed in current efforts to achieve the sustainability of our cities.

These are five barriers that challenge the collective will of APEC economies and demand a cooperative design to implement a program of environmental actions, within the context of the social and political realities of each economy.

A Cooperative Design for Environmental Action

To provide a timely response to each of these barriers, the effective consultative processes that guide the efforts of all APEC fora can be tailored to address the constraints that stand in the way of sustainable urbanization. For APEC cities to evolve in a sustainable manner requires that a consensus of appropriate actions be reached, and implemented with due regard to the urgency of the situation.

Ministers agree to enhance sustainable urbanization efforts within APEC, by taking action to mitigate the five focal barriers.

BRIDGE THE GAP

Building on existing initiatives, APEC members will encourage the exchange of information, the wide-spread communication of ideas, and the transfer of essential skills through a variety of cooperative mechanisms.

To facilitate the sustainability of cities member economies will:

share.....APEC best practices for sustainable urbanization through a compendium of member economies' examples of success stories;

develop.....guidelines for sustainable planning, design, construction, and operation of infrastructure and buildings, through workshops and expert sessions; and guidelines for recycling;

establish...an APEC Internet website showcasing environmental solutions for sustainable cities; and,

build.....networks and alliances to enhance the capacity for key stakeholders (including youth, women, and aboriginal peoples) to play an active role in addressing the challenges of urbanization.

ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT

The realization of specific environmental objectives requires cross-sectoral action to facilitate the flow of investment capital for environmentally sound initiatives, and the effective function of economic instruments essential to the sustainability of APEC cities.

In the context of investment liberalization and facilitation, member economies will:

share experiences of innovative approaches to financing initiatives, such as a life-cycle approach to the planning, design, construction, and operation of infrastructure and buildings, experimentation with pilot projects, and entrepreneurial initiatives;

examine.....economic instruments as tools for leveraging the sustainability of APEC cities in areas such as resource consumption and pollution prevention; and

cooperate.....with counterparts in Trade, Finance and other Ministries on a continuing basis.

INTEGRATE THE AGENDAS

Cross-sectoral (social, economic, environmental, and political) connectedness has been accepted by the global community. Focused actions are needed in APEC economies to infuse this concept throughout public agencies and private organizations in the region.

Member economies agree to:

weave.....the sustainable cities theme into the APEC initiatives of Cleaner Production/Clean Technology, Sustainability of the Marine Environment, and the Impact of Expanding Population and Economic Growth on Food, Energy and the Environment (FEEEP);

encourage....and enhance public/private partnerships to address sustainable urbanization issues;

integrate.....environmental requirements for sustainable cities as a cross-cutting issue in APEC fora; and,

support.....the involvement of local authorities in urban planning and development issues.

LEARN FROM INDIVIDUALS

APEC economies should be encouraged to reach out to citizens throughout their economies to solicit their participation, benefit from their contribution, and continue the dialogue initiated in APEC fora. Respect for human dignity and equity lie at the core of successful human endeavors.

In the interest of a consensual approach member economies will:

involve.....community stakeholders in decision-making relevant to the environmental requirements for sustainable cities in their region;

engage.....citizens who are currently involved in grass-roots sustainable practices to share their skills and knowledge within and between economies;

provide.....opportunity of access to educational, health, and financial resources for all citizens;

encourage...citizens to become actively involved in working toward sustainable cities through individual actions in their homes and businesses;

facilitate.....the wide-spread realization of "Local Agenda 21" communities through capacity building of local authorities; and,

build..... the involvement of all citizens regarding urbanization challenges through participation in local and regional levels, and in other APEC fora.

ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

APEC economies will strive to incorporate the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of the population into the productive process.

With these sectors of the population in mind, member economies will:

promote.....economic development through the creation of jobs;

address.....necessities for human settlements; and,

expand.....social infrastructure services.

Maintain the Momentum

In addition, to maintain the momentum generated through previous fora and intensify it in the Agenda for Cooperation, Ministers commit to follow through with specific action-oriented environmental measures in pursuit of implementation of the global and APEC environment agendas, as they pertain to the sustainability of cities (e.g. reduction of lead in gasoline).

In our collective focused action, and within each APEC economy, APEC Ministers responsible for the Environment embrace the six themes identified by APEC Economic Leaders in Subic Bay, Philippines in November, 1996: Developing Human Capital; Fostering Safe, Efficient Capital Markets; Strengthening Economic Infrastructure; Harnessing Technologies of the Future; Promoting Environmentally Sustainable Growth; and Encouraging the Growth of Small and Medium (-sized) Enterprises.

In presenting the Agenda for Cooperation on Sustainable Cities to APEC Economic Leaders, Ministers responsible for the Environment agree to provide a progress report on its implementation in 1998.

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