



## 5th Roundtable of Asia-Europe Environment Forum

### Achieving Urban Sustainability: Integrated Environmental Management

November 28-29, 2007 | Shenzhen, China

#### Rapporteurs' Report

#### Introduction

The Asia-Europe Environment Forum brought together over 40 sustainable development practitioners, scientists and academic experts, national and local government representatives, civil society members and media primarily to share information and experiences on sustainable urban management practices in Europe and Asia. Through the process, the Roundtable aimed to

- (a) generate policy recommendations;
- (b) identify potential areas of cooperation;
- (c) promote networking; and
- (d) introduce an open scenario-building technique

in order to enhance urban management and sustainability cooperation in ASEM countries.

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 Environmental Strategies (IGES) the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia (SENSA)

#### Highlights from roundtable:

##### Session 1 – The Challenges of Sustainable Urban Management

The 4th Global Environment Outlook maintains that there are clear indicators of growing global sustainability. Some 250 million people in Asia have been lifted out of poverty through sustained economic growth. There have been improvements in natural resource protection in the developing world. There has also been visible progress achieved in energy efficiency in the developed world. However, the world remains highly vulnerable to climate change effects, health hazards posed by pollution, and adverse impacts of urbanisation.

Despite having better technology, better science and a more informed public, “action has not matched the need” to improve environmental conditions, as Zhang Jinhua, Acting Coordinator of UNEP Environment Assessment and Early Warning programme for Asia-Pacific said.

This was echoed by Peter Gotsch, Coordinator of the Network of European Researcher on Urbanisation in the South (N-AERUS) who thinks that rapid urbanisation worldwide and the emergence of “*homo urbanicus*” have seriously challenged the achievement of urban

environmental sustainability. He believes though that this challenge could largely be addressed with the help of science and research (S&R). The key, therefore, is to closely link the S&R community with urban planners and decision-makers. S&R must be integrated and embedded in a delineated framework of policy and action. After all the European community of researchers which work on urban issues has many valuable experiences to share.

One of the central issues raised during the roundtable was how the exponential growth of cities could be decoupled from environmental degradation that is in excess of the carrying capacity of the planet, now and in the future. For instance, the number of vehicles in Beijing has been increasing at a rate of 15 % per year, clogging streets once full of bicycles with cars and magnifying the city's air pollution burden.

Like China, India is urbanising at an extraordinary rate. Delhi-based researcher Akshima Dogra from The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) noted that the number of cities with a population of one million or more rose from 12 in 1981 to 35 in 2001 when India's urban population was already equivalent to the total urban population of the US, France and Italy combined. Yet up to 30% of urban dwellers are living below the official poverty line and nearly 40% urban households still do not have access to safe drinking water source within premises.

More alarmingly, over the same period, the number of vehicles in six major metropolises of India grew four times faster than their population. In Delhi alone, nearly 1,000 new vehicles are being added to the roads daily, threatening to set aside the gains made by converting its buses to CNG and investment in a metro system that carries 500,000 passengers a day. Environmentalists fear the city could even revert to having one of the most toxic atmospheres in the world.

Any notion that Europe could lecture Asia on sustainable urban development was dispelled by Ronan Uhel, of the European Environment Agency. As his meticulous analysis of urban sprawl in Europe found, an area equivalent to five times the size of Greater London had been colonised for urban development between 1990 and 2000.

Four-fifths of the Rhine river's floodplain has been consumed by urban development, so it is no surprise that there is flooding in these areas. "We don't have a spatial development vision in Europe -- can you believe it?", he exclaimed. "What we have is market-driven development led by engineers and road construction" -- often EU-funded.

## Session 2 - Convergence or Divergence? Urban management: Tools and Mechanisms in Asia and Europe

A number of approaches for sustainability have been developed and applied in Asia and Europe and these have led to good results. One such approach, which the Partnership in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) has been employing with great success, is the integrated coastal management (ICM). Dr. Yu Huming cited Batangas Bay in the Philippines and Xiamen in China as models that proved that ICM is a potent tool for environmental protection, conflict resolution, economic development and social cohesion. In Xiamen, for example, the once polluted Yuandang lagoon had been cleaned up to become the centerpiece of a new development zone that is in harmony with nature.

Dr. Yu also suggested that there are points of mutual learning between Asia and Europe, for example, the spirit of seeking consensus-based agreement among the Asian countries as embodied in developing Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia, and the significant progress made in Europe in spearheading environmental legal instruments. In addition, Christer Holtsberg, Director of the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia, said that practical marine co-operation in east Asia could be strengthened if it could have an equivalent of the multi-national Baltic Commission.

Responding to Mr Holtsberg's reference to the Baltic Commission, Kaja Peterson, of the Stockholm Environment Institute talked about the Commission and its activities involving the nine nations surrounding the Baltic. Tallinn, one of 400 cities and towns that make up the Union of Baltic Cities, has also proposed the annual designation of a European "Green Capital" -- modeled on the successful European City of Culture.

In China, the government is working on a sustainable master plan for Guiyang City, capital of China's Guizhou province, which aims to reduce the carbon footprint of this growing city of 3.5 million people in the longer term. The Olympic Games will come and go, but it is what happens in the longer term in Beijing and other mega-cities that will ultimately determine whether the world will win the battle against climate change. That is why prototypes such as Dongtan eco-city, planned for Chongming Island, at the mouth of the Yangtze River, north of Shanghai, could offer a way forward.

To be developed by Treasury Holdings China in partnership with Shanghai Industrial Investment Holdings, it will provide sustainable homes, workplaces and leisure facilities for 80,000 people -- producing its own energy from wind, solar, bio-fuel and municipal waste, with public transport and cyclepaths making the city as "carbon neutral" as possible.

Treasury's Director Richard Barrett told the forum that Dongtan would be one of the flagship projects for the Shanghai Expo in 2010, which will have as its theme "Chinese Wisdom in Urban Development", and he believed that Dongtan would offer "an answer, a prototype for other cities" that were serious about reducing their carbon emissions.

Although the project has been delayed and its first phase would not be completed until 2010, Dongtan is already being featured among the "10 new wonders" of China, along with Beijing's Olympic stadium, new international airport, national theatre and Central Chinese TV complex and the 101-storey Shanghai World Financial Centre. However, during the discussion, a need was stressed for the Dongtan project to take a further look if the wetland ecosystem health in Dongtan was carefully maintained during the project development and implementation.

One of the problems common to Asia and Europe is that urban development is often divorced from the provision of transport to serve it. However, as Anna Chung of International Association of Public Transport (UITP) pointed out, Hong Kong still achieves a modal split of 82% for public transport, walking and cycling, while in Shanghai it is 93% -- much higher than any European city. The difference seems to be in the proper handling of the inter-relationships among density, diversity and design.

Meanwhile, many organizations are building capacities as means to attaining sustainability. For instance, the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities, a multi-stakeholder regional organization, has been helping about 30 cities manage urban air quality through generation and sharing of information and knowledge, training, policy dialogues, etc.

### Session 3 – New Solutions, New Beginnings: What is the Role of Innovations in Urban Management?

Faced with the adverse impacts of urbanisation, civil society and proactive communities have been cooperating, oftentimes with local governments, in actively introducing innovations and addressing attendant problems.

In India, the government launched the Urban Renewal Mission in 2005 to facilitate the planned development of cities through efficiency in urban infrastructure and service delivery, community participation and greater accountability of local and parastatal agencies. Ms. Dogra observed,

however, that while the scheme is significant, its emphasis is currently on infrastructure and hardly on sustainability, thus raising questions on its long-term viability at this point.

Shaming campaigns seem to have worked better in India. In New Delhi, for example, a citizens' legal action in 1998 led the Supreme Court to order that the city's bus fleet be converted to run on compressed natural gas (CNG) rather than polluting diesel fuel. Implementation of the court's order resulted in a measurable improvement in air quality.

New innovative measures are also being implemented in Japan. Dr Shizuka Hashimoto, of the National Institute for Environmental Studies (NIES) of Japan, said Japan has 26 eco-towns, such as Kawasaki, which has a population of 1.3 million. Ninety per cent of its municipal solid waste used to be incinerated, but a combination of measures had increased the recycling rate to 37%, with a reduction of 25,000 tonnes in CO<sub>2</sub>.

Marta Szigeti Bonifert offered the Budapest-based Regional Environmental Centre (REC) as a good model for the rest of the world. Working with other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, it had proved vital in mobilising a "silent revolution of environmentalism" among citizens through such initiatives as green pack for schools.

A discussion during the roundtable underlined a general lack of co-operation between countries, civil societies and research institutes. There was some support for an Asian equivalent of REC, particularly in terms of capacity building in civil society, given that ASEAN operates very much at a high political level and a more bottom-up approach is needed.

What is happening on the ground in the world's cities forms a very real backdrop to the latest round of UN climate change talks, inaugurated on the Indonesian island of Bali in December 2007. Cutting air pollution would not only bring health benefits for their inhabitants, but would also reduce greenhouse gas emissions -- a "win-win" for them, and for the planet.

#### Session 4 - Learning from Local-International Initiatives: Solutions through Partnership

A number of local-international partnerships, particularly between Europe and Asia, have brought solutions to some problems confronting urban sustainability.

The French Development Agency has been actively providing assistance to Asian countries such as China, Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. It has a considerable portfolio pertaining to urban management particularly in the areas of infrastructure, planning and development strategy, capacity building, decentralization and private sector participation.

The various initiatives of CAI-Asia and its national counterparts have largely been a project assisted by international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank and World Bank, and bilateral institutions such as German Agency for Technical Cooperation, and international NGOs such as IUCN, and private sector companies such as Shell. Since June 2007, CAI-Asia ceased to be a "project" and became "CAI-Asia Center", a registered NGO with its own legal personality; this important step is expected to result in the sustainability of its programs and activities in Asia, according to Glynda Bathan, CAI-Asia Center's Strategic Linkages Division.

CAI-Asia China Project, which is co-funded by the ADB, World Bank and the US Energy Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation, is working with more than 10 major Chinese cities to improve air quality management at local level. "We're not about re-inventing the wheel," said Yan Peng, its co-ordinator. "We assist cities by strengthening their capacity in addressing their pressing challenges in air quality problems by matching their needs for knowledge, skills, and technical advice with the available information, training, and expertise from within China, Asia, North America and Europe, such as how to make the various aspects of Air Quality Management link

with one another, and how to identify the key emission sources in these cities.”

The Kitakyushu City’s experience, which Mr. Hiroshi Mizoguchi refers to as a “Miracle in the World History”, provides a lot of knowledge and experience in converting a highly polluted city into a sustainable urban community. It shows that with proper planning, public participation and cooperation among government and other institutions, miracles can happen. Kitakyushu has now been transferring the knowledge and experience through the City-to-City Cooperation in many cities such as Dalian in China, Cebu in the Philippines and Surabaya in Indonesia.

## **Recommendations**

A number of suggestions and recommendations came out of the Roundtable. These may be classified into those that could address urbanisation challenges in general, and those that may strengthen Asia-Europe cooperation in urban management.

### **General Recommendations**

1. UITP’s 5-point Rome Manifesto, which suggests a blueprint for creating sustainable cities, covers a big part of the general recommendations, i.e.:
  - Allocate urban space according to traveller, not vehicle, numbers.
  - Charge a fair price for transport choices.
  - Coordinate planning of land use and transport.
  - Get the basics right.
  - Strengthen investment in public transport.
2. Improve governance and institutional mechanisms by
  - reflecting multiple levels of responsibilities and benefit transfers
  - involving multi-stakeholder and participatory processes
3. Promote an integrated approach to urban planning that:
  - has both spatial development perspective (vision) and physical planning dimension
  - redefines the metrics and reviews and adapts other approaches such as compact city and polycentric scenarios.
  - ensures “buy-in” by the public through their participation
  - includes long-term risk assessment
4. Strengthen linkage with business to promote corporate social responsibility that goes beyond ‘greenwashing’
5. Promote environmental education especially to children, who have been found to be very good teachers of sustainability to adults.
6. Generate and share information for formulating response initiatives, decision-making and generating public cooperation. For instance, the publication of air pollution data could increase public pressure to “leverage” action and initiate health impact studies to inform a long-term vision of urban sustainability.
7. Use S&R in urban planning and decision-making to the extent possible. In relation to this, make urban areas “laboratories of sustainability” in response to the view that “a city is not an object but a process.”

## **Recommendation on Asia-Europe Cooperation**

8. Establish an information and knowledge-sharing platform, or 'clearing house' possibly centering in European Environment Agency for Europe and Collaborative Assessment Network for Asia (eKHub) that would:
  - capture and transfer knowledge;
  - strengthen the national and regional data bases;
  - exchange/replicate experiences and good practices;
  - organize Roundtables of local executives/political leaders;
  - reach local communities; and
  - create knowledge networks involving European and Asian cities.
9. Capacity building involving organisations in the ENVforum network, making more use of the media and existing networks to disseminate information mainly in the forms of training and exchange programs particularly in the following areas:
  - Integrated planning and policy analysis;
  - air quality assessment and policies
  - waste management
  - payment for environmental services.

### Summary of Scenario building workshop

In a new initiative designed to maximise the value of the meetings for the participants, a third day was set aside for the workshop on scenario-building methodology. The environmental application of this methodology has been further developed by the EEA. It allows for a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach to policymaking and testing. As such, it aids in developing robust policies that can help cope with unexpected trends.

The workshop was moderated by Dr David Stanners and Mr Ronan Uhel from the EEA, together with the assistance of Mr Rahiman Abdullah, Project Executive for the ENVforum, and Ms Ella Antonio, member of the ENVforum Steering Committee.

The workshop began with an overview and introduction to the methodology and its application. Participants then broke up into two smaller groups. Benefiting from a closer interaction with one another, the groups (with around 15 per group) identified priorities and patterns related to urban management.

Beginning with the identification of drivers for sustainable urban management, workshop participants worked together to plot them against the axes of importance and uncertainty. This exercise allowed participants to re-examine how much exactly they knew of trends and their effects and how much they do not.

Moving ahead, the groups created future scenarios based on the main drivers. What was interesting for them was finding out how some unexpected possibilities could turn up in the possible future. The next challenge was trying to identify which policies would be better suited to deal with those unexpected possibilities.

Over the day, the groups met again in order to compare their work. The final session allowed the participants to reflect upon the possible applications for the methodology and how it could complement current approaches used.