

FORUM ON EXPERIENCES AND BEST PRACTICES OF CITIES AND SUBNATIONAL AUTHORITIES IN RELATION TO ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

Tuesday, 10 June 2014, 10.00 – 13.00

Summary by the Chair Dr. Aisa Kirabo Kacyira (UN-HABITAT)

In line with forum's objective to facilitate the sharing among Parties of experiences and best practices of cities and subnational authorities with a view to promoting the exchange of information and voluntary cooperation, participants engaged with a series of overview presentations from sectoral experts and a panel discussion led by representatives of cities and subnational authorities. These inputs facilitated an interaction between Parties and other participants on which elaborated on the following themes:

1. The role of cities and subnational authorities in climate action;
2. The potential for action by cities and subnational authorities;
3. The challenges and barriers faced; and
4. The means of capturing and catalyzing future action.

ROLE OF CITIES AND SUBNATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The key role of city and subnational authorities in driving the full range of climate actions was emphasized by invited panellists and many additional interventions given that:

- Political leadership at the local level can effectively shape attitudes and behaviour, particularly if citizens are engaged in participatory planning processes
- Action planned at the local level can be closely aligned with the needs of citizens;
- Local representatives can be directly accountable for the timely and efficient delivery of action, particularly action which directly impacts positively on local living conditions and generates significant co-benefits; and
- Local policy design and implementation provides an essential testing ground for policy innovation as many climate change related mandates lie within local jurisdictions. Local innovations can then be modified, replicated and scaled-up and integrated into national actions to create synergies and increase impact.

POTENTIAL FOR ACTION

It was emphasized that urban areas account for 67–76 per cent of energy use and that 50–80 per cent of climate related functions and actions will take place under the purview of subnational authorities. In the context of high mitigation potentials in the pre-2020 period equal consideration was given to the importance of early action to avoid long-term lock-in resulting from failure to plan urban systems in a sustainable manner or provide sufficient guidance and incentives for action.

It was further noted that with urban populations set to double until 2015 and urban land cover to grow even more rapidly, at least 80 billion m² of new floor space in buildings will be constructed by 2030. The need to ensure that such a vital sector is designed with the long term need of the response to climate change in mind was emphasized. The potential emission savings resulting from climate friendly building designs and practices were highlighted together with the potential of carbon-neutrality in operational energy usage, including the potential for

USD 5.5 trillion in monetary savings by 2030 in the North American context alone. The adaptation co-benefits of such innovative approaches to building design were recognized. The retrofit of existing building stock was also highlighted as a vital initiative with 30 per cent reductions in energy costs in public housing units achieved where retrofits have been completed.

The forum further took note of the importance of spatial planning in climate action. Promotion of mixed use and compact development of cities are key enablers of non-motorized modes of transport and success in mass public transport systems like bus rapid transit (BRT) schemes in developing countries, and the transfer of such initiatives to developed country cities. The urgent need to improve planning to avoid long-term lock-in of ineffective and emission intensive urban form, energy intensive buildings and inefficient transport infrastructure was emphasized. In this regard the forum also identified the key role of spatial planning in adaptation through ensuring the development is directed in a manner that maintains and augments natural defences of ecosystems, such as mangroves and flood plains, and minimizes the need for continued relocation and the resultant poor quality of short term housing solutions. In this context, it was observed, minimizing the disruptive social impacts and the economic costs of the responses to increased climatic variability is critical.

The forum considered the importance of applying a wide range of policy responses that were most suited to specific local needs. However, a number of key cross-sectoral policy interventions were highlighted as being particularly successful in a broad range of contexts. For instance, the importance of locally declared medium-term climate change targets to provide political, and in some cases legal, direction to actions was emphasized. Incentive mechanisms, such as congestion charging and cap-and-trade programmes, were identified as means of providing incentives for short term shifts in consumption patterns, as were innovative national multi-level financing mechanisms. Meanwhile options for action with longer term benefit horizons could be catalyzed through enhanced standards, such as building regulations and vehicle emissions standards. The forum also took note that the most significant policy intervention for catalyzing low and no-cost measures is the provision of information regarding and support for the breakthrough and broad uptake of new techniques and technologies.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Three spheres of challenges and barriers were identified during forum. These were:

1. Institutional: including overlapping mandates and limitations on authority within national governance systems, and the need of operating in defined frameworks, that create synergy and linkages between all levels of climate action including the UNFCCC process, national climate policies and practical action at the subnational level;
2. Financial: including that not all authorities are incorporated in an institutional manner that provides access to financial markets and mechanisms, limitations in the scale or authority of public budgeting and competing budgetary priorities;
3. Capacity: including knowledge of new techniques and technologies, need for transparent baselines and capacity to calculate these or compile and update inventories, insufficient awareness of technical options and/or the skills to support implementation.

CAPTURING AND CATALYZING ENHANCED ACTION

IMMEDIATE OPTIONS FOR PARTIES, CITIES AND SUBNATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The forum took note that many barriers to action could be relatively quickly addressed through:

1. *Coordination*: National governments can promote enhanced action through the establishment of nationally appropriate coordination mechanisms which provide a basis for developing effective

implementation plans based on local circumstances and which maximize mitigation and adaptation benefits of socio-economic development policies and plans; and

2. *Integration:* Through the establishment of medium term climate action targets subnational authorities could achieve greater integration of climate considerations into the full range of planning processes and enhance the synergies, coherence and effectiveness of national responses to climate change.

FUTURE ROLE OF THE UNFCCC PROCESS

Forum participants expressed a need for enhanced structure in the engagement of subnational authorities in the UNFCCC process for a range and diversity of purposes. These included:

1. *Recognition of action:* The need to understand the diversity of locally designed responses to climate change, including those involving communities and citizens, and provide recognition of such action was underscored. It was proposed that this could be achieved through a system for recognition of initiatives and action by non-State actors. Some interventions specifically highlighted the need to provide access to local and subnational authorities to UNFCCC infrastructure in the support of implementation, including capacity building and recognition of market based approaches developed at the subnational level. In this regard, the importance of ensuring accountability and transparency of action in manner consistent with the requirements of the Convention was highlighted.
 2. *Facilitation of interaction:* The need for enhanced interaction of the UNFCCC process with subnational authorities, potentially through future meetings of such a forum, was emphasized in order to:
 - Allow Parties to engage further on the means and impacts of coordinating and facilitating action at the subnational level, recognizing that the diversity of governance approaches in individual Parties requires specific approaches to be nationally determined; and
 - Provide a platform for practitioners to directly interact and share experiences.
 3. *Supporting implementation:* Lastly the forum considered the potential of establishing an Action Programme under the Conference of the Parties to support the integration of action through established governance structures and guide the supportive work of various UNFCCC institutions, including the operating entities of the financial mechanism. The importance of such an Action Programme in catalyzing the development of climate action goals by those subnational authorities without current targets or goals was emphasized, in addition to the potential to enhance existing goals.
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