



**First World Congress on Cities and Adaptation to Climate Change  
Bonn, 30 May 2010**

**Address by Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address to you on the occasion of this important conference. It gives me an opportunity to commend you for the important work that you have taken forward.

Work on adaptation under the UNFCCC has directly benefited from your contributions. ICLEI is one of the more than 170 partners to the Nairobi work programme on vulnerability, impacts and adaptation to climate change.

ICLEI committed itself through an Action Pledge to contribute to the work of the programme in six areas. These areas include: methods and tools, climate related risks and extreme events, socio-economic information, adaptation planning and practices, research and technologies for adaptation.

This conference is part of a series of actions under the ICLEI Action Pledge. The Nairobi work programme has succeeded in engaging organizations, institutions, experts, communities and the private sector in the adaptation discourse.

It has also succeeded in disseminating adaptation knowledge to a variety of stakeholders that are engaged in adaptation work. The programme is set to be reviewed at Cancún and it would be beneficial for the programme's partners to continue their strong involvement.

This is particularly important, because Copenhagen did not fully respond to the high expectations for the conference.

As you know, the negotiations on strengthened long-term cooperation were not completed in Copenhagen. However, good progress was achieved on many issues, including on adaptation, a technology mechanism and improvements to the Kyoto Protocol's clean development mechanism.

Convergence was reached that a framework for implementation will contain a strong adaptation component with clear objectives, principles and categories of action.

Outstanding issues include a loss and damage mechanism, assessments of adaptation actions and financial and technological support for adaptation beyond 2012.

Of course Copenhagen also produced the Copenhagen Accord, which is a clear letter of political intent to constrain emissions and boost adaptation.

Lastly, Copenhagen was important because it raised climate change policy to the highest political level. But the political intent to constrain emissions and adapt to climate change needs to be translated into action on the city level. Ultimately, it is cities that will directly face and directly deal with climate change impacts.

The climate change conference in Cancún at the end of the year provides a renewed opportunity to advance international climate change action.

The negotiations need to be completed in Cancún so that a comprehensive framework for implementation can be established to unleash strong global cooperation on climate change.

Within this, an operational adaptation programme will offer new opportunities for cities to boost adaptation action. But in the meantime, action at local level needs to continue to move forward.

You have discussed how cities both contribute to and suffer from the impacts of climate change, and how adaptation adds pressure on city budgets and will increasingly do so in future.

Perhaps more than anywhere else, cities offer the opportunity to develop adaptation and mitigation win-win initiatives. In the absence of decisive global policies on climate change, cities need to serve as centres of policy ingenuity to drive real action.

For example, cities can work closely with the local private sector to develop and implement win-win policies. This will ensure broad stakeholder involvement and will contribute to identifying win-win adaptation and mitigation measures that are economically sound.

Another example is that cities can develop local cap-and-trade mechanisms, like in Los Angeles or Santiago. Such mechanisms could be designed in a way that they generate finances for adaptation.

Cities can also strengthen partnerships between urban and rural communities in order to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources. The role of rural areas as providers of environmental and ecosystem services needs to be acknowledged in both mitigation and adaptation.

Inclusive and decisive action on city and local government level can serve as initiatives that inform national policy formulation and implementation. Given that cities will need to be at the forefront of turning climate change policy into action, implementation could also inform international policy considerations - specifically the adaptation framework under discussion in the negotiations.

But for this, you need to keep the process informed of your actions and continue to play a strong role in the work of the UNFCCC.

Over the years, the negotiating process has made historic advances, but it is worrying to note that the scientific community's urgent call for action is not being fully answered.

We know from past experience that the poor in all countries suffer most from the impacts of climate change. Local authorities are the first these poor people turn to for help - help that local authorities are hard placed to provide without a national and international policy framework. National governments should not be allowed to get away with this.

The “inverted approach” in which local needs and actions dictate how funds/financing is administered should be the way to advance in future.

Thank you.

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