

Local Sustainability 1

Konrad Otto-Zimmermann
Editor

Resilient Cities

Cities and Adaptation
to Climate Change
Proceedings of the Global Forum 2010

I.C.L.E.I.
Local
Governments
for Sustainability

 Springer

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Volume 1

Series Editor: Monika Zimmermann

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ISBN 978-94-007-0784-9 e-ISBN 978-94-007-0785-6
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0785-6
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011929227

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Printed on acid-free paper

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Foreword

Preparing for the impacts of climate change on the world's cities is a major challenge of the twenty-first century. No-one today can really foresee the predicament in which a town or city will find itself 10, 20 or 30 years down the road. We must bear in mind that the greatest impacts of disasters resulting from climate change begin and end in cities.

Prevention can be greatly enhanced through better and smarter land-use planning and building codes so that cities keep their ecological footprint to the minimum, and ensure their residents, especially the poorest, are protected as best as possible against disaster.

By far the most vulnerable to natural disasters, the urban poor often have no choice but to live in sub-standard housing in places often prone to floods or landslides – places which lack even the most basic human services and where no-one else wants to live. When disaster strikes they have few or no private assets or social safety nets to fall back upon.

Unless the world takes decisive action, this problem may well worsen in coming decades ahead. Science tells us that already rising sea levels, cyclones, heat waves and droughts, changing rain patterns and other impacts of climate disruption are becoming increasingly manifest.

Furthermore in coming years, vulnerability increasingly will become urbanized given that already more than half of the world's people now live in cities, and that projections show that by 2050 this figure will rise to 70%.

Similarly the number of slum dwellers is also set to rise. Make no mistake, it will be those living in absolute poverty, especially in the developing countries, who will suffer most in any climate crisis.

It is heartening that local leaders are beginning to find solutions to these problems. Cities are assessing which communities, places and sectors are most vulnerable. They are investing in climate proofing their infrastructure networks.

They are integrating adaptation action in urban planning initiatives and municipal finance scenarios. Additionally, the international community is slowly waking up to the need and obligation for cities to become more resilient to the impacts that we expect from a changing climate.

We thus salute the Resilient Cities Congress and commend ICLEI for taking the lead in forging the partnership of organizations supporting the Congress.

As a former mayor I know that local officials and leaders often learn best from one another, and this Congress offers a golden opportunity. At the same time, the Congress is also an opportunity for all who deal with the very important urban dimension of climate change to interact with one another.

And finally the Congress offers city officials and their organizations an ideal opportunity to forge a common position from which to lobby national governments and the international community for a fair share of the adaptation resources pledged – resources cities so desperately need to become more resilient.

UN-HABITAT is honoured to serve on the Program Committee of the Resilient Cities Congress, and I am pleased to serve as a Patron of the Congress. The present proceedings document from the inaugural Congress of 2010 offers a wealth of insights into how to make cities more resilient.

At the same time I wish the distinguished delegates in the Resilient Cities Congresses every success with their deliberations now and in the future.

Dr. Joan Clos
Under-Secretary General United Nations
Executive Director UN-HABITAT

Authors

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Acknowledgements

The first annual global forum on cities and adaptation to climate change, Resilient Cities 2010, took place from 28 May to 30 May 2010 in Bonn, Germany back to back with the United Nations Climate Talks. Hosted by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the World Mayors Council on Climate Change and the City of Bonn, the congress was a unique starting point in addressing the crucial topic of adaptation in urban contexts.

With over 500 participants from 53 countries worldwide, this event far surpassed our expectations, generating significant interest and demonstrating the need for such a global platform.

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Resilient Cities 2010 Steering Board for their strategic advice on the profile and positioning of the forum: David Cadman, Marcelo Ebrard, Nicky Gavron, Helena Molin Valdés, Youssef Nassef, Jürgen Nimptsch, Achim Steiner, and Anna Tibaijuka.

Special thanks are owed to the Program Committee members who assisted with the development of the program structure and the review of papers submitted: Janos Bogardi, Martha Delgado Peralta, David Dodman, Mikaela Engert, Abha Joshi Ghani, Debra Roberts, Rafael Tuts, Pablo Vaggione, and Thorsten Schlurmann.

A special thank you goes also to David Jackson that prepared a complete summary of the event that was presented at the closing plenary and is available on the congress website.

I would also like to thank our Endorsing Partners for their support (and apologize for the flood of acronyms): UN-HABITAT, UNEP, UNDP, UNFCCC, UNCCD, UNU-EHS, UNISDR, UNESCAP, WB, ADB, IADB, EEA, BMU, BMZ, UBA, DKKV, IIED, IUCN, EMI, ISoCaRP, Urban Age, ICCIP, InWent, and TERI.

The Sponsoring Partners without whose support the first congress could not have been held, were: EU European Regional Development Fund, State of North Rhine Westphalia, Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank in Bonn, Solar World, Rockefeller Foundation, UNISDR, USAID and World Bank Institute.

Our Media Partner, Springer, has delighted us with the publication of this book.

The City of Bonn should also be acknowledged for hosting the Resilient Cities congress series.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Resilient Cities 2010 Core Team, including Alice Balbo, Monika Zimmermann, Olivia Tusinski, Janeth Pineda, Lisa Bieker and Joseph Wladkowski whose dedication was essential in realizing this first stepping stone, but also Nathan Brettschneider and Olivia Tusinski for editing and Monika Zimmermann, Alice Balbo and Aurore Colella for finalizing this book.

All of us look forward to continuing the exchange and dialogue at Resilient Cities 2011.

Konrad Otto-Zimmermann
Congress Chair
ICLEI Secretary General

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