

WORKSHOP 7

Cities, Communities and Urbanisation

Moderators

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The Earth Charter states that environmental protection, human rights, equitable human development and peace are interdependent and necessary for a sustainable future. It recognizes that personal and community commitment to these principles is the basis for the well-being for the local and global society.

Sadly, it's been the case in many places that economic globalisation and urbanisation weaken connections to local places, people and resources. In fast-growing urban areas, such as in Africa and Asia, city dwellers face particular challenges for making sustainable choices; often we are faced with trade-offs between environmental, social, and economic well-being, such as:

- People may be forced to degrade the environment in order to meet the basic needs
- What if there isn't enough money to treat sewage and a municipality has to choose between schools and STPs? Or houses for the poor and protection of open green spaces?

It is here that an ethical framework can provide guidance. An increasing number of community leaders are trying to revive communities in a more sustainable way; many of them have found the Earth Charter a suitable framework to accomplish this.

The Earth Charter Initiative (ECI) suggests that the Earth Charter principles can be used in several ways in cities, such as a

- Strategy for awareness raising
- Framework for action planning and community development
- Guide for policy making and programme initiatives
- Assessment tool to evaluate progress toward sustainability

Over 400 towns and cities have endorsed the Earth Charter, which in turn led to thousands of local citizens becoming aware of it. These municipalities are located across the globe. Cities and towns such as Sao Paulo, North Vancouver, Canada; San Jose, Costa Rica; Urbino, Italy; Oslo, Norway; Berkeley, California and Bournemouth, UK have all stated their support for the Earth Charter. In Spain alone, over 220 municipalities have endorsed the Earth Charter. Earth Charter endorsement has also come from all 99 city governments in Jordan. In addition to individual municipalities, leagues and organizations of local community authorities have also endorsed the Earth Charter.

ECI Secretariat has compiled several case studies and materials on how local governments and communities are using the Earth Charter. The EarthCAT workbook is a useful tool for local sustainability planning. Earlier this year in the Netherlands, an Earth Charter Cities Manifesto was prepared. In September 2010, the city of Montpelier, Vermont, USA, has completed a process to adopt a new Master Plan for Sustainability that follows the principles of the Earth Charter, called enVision Montpelier.

The *Cities, Communities and Urbanization* workshop will look at ways in which sustainable communities can be promoted through individual and community engagement. Practical knowledge of building socially, economically and environmentally sustainable communities will be shared. The workshop group will also attempt to identify priority actions for applying the principles of the Earth Charter.

Objectives of the Workshop

1. Share about experiences and good practices of local sustainability planning and explore commonality with the Earth Charter in these.
2. Explore ways to develop resources and tools needed to support the implementation of Earth Charter principles in the development of sustainable communities.

A summary of the discussion at the workshops will be posted on the Conference website each day. Each workshop will come up with a final report on Day Three. The report will include a road map for the future and a set of recommendations for the Rio plus 20 Conference proposed in Brazil 2012, the end of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) Conference in Japan in 2014, as well as for the next decade of the Earth Charter 2010 - 2020.