



## UPDATE ON SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES SINCE THE BOLIVIA SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (1996) AND SANTA CRUZ +10

First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development  
December 4-5, 2006 Santa Cruz De La Sierra, Bolivia  
Sustainable Cities Initiatives in the Americas Hemisphere webpage:  
<http://www.oas.org/dsd/SustainableCities.htm>

During the Forty First Lecture Series of the Americas which took place on September 14, 2010, titled “Perspectives from City Hall: Better Cities for Better Lives” the speakers Oscar Luis Castañeda (Mayor of Lima, Peru), Desmond Mackenzie (Mayor of Kingston, Jamaica) and Enrique Peñalosa (Former Mayor of Bogota, Colombia) spoke about the dramatic and accelerating changes experienced by the cities of the region. Governments are channeling more resources and increased responsibilities to sub-national jurisdictions. In turn, many regional and local governments are facilitating business and community initiatives to expand and improve services in terms of coverage, quality and efficiency. International technical assistance and lending programs are supporting these changes. The Plan of Action refers to four areas under this subject: economic development (initiatives 32 to 35), housing (initiatives 36 to 40), pollution prevention and environmental protection (initiatives 38 to 45), and sustainable transport (initiatives 43 and 46) (See Annex 1). In response cities are forging ahead with improved policies and plans in:

- Public Transport
- Cycling & Walking
- Sustainable Urban Development, Waste Management
- Climate, Energy, & Transport Policy
- Traffic Reduction
- Outreach & Awareness

Furthermore, the Inter-American Program on Sustainable Development (2006-2009) (PIDS), includes the following themes: Sustainable Agriculture and Sustainable Forest Management and other natural resources; Water Resources, Land and Health; Natural Disasters Risk Management; Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity; Coastal Zone Management and Climate Change Adaptation; Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Promotion; and Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening for Sustainable Development and Environmental Management.

Specific references to improved sustainable cities management are inherent within these themes, for example, under AGENDA OF THE SECOND INTER-AMERICAN MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH LEVEL AUTHORITIES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT “Towards Sustainable Development in the Americas” (October 6 – 8, 2010 – Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic) para 4. Risk Management and Planning stated: “improving Risk Management through land use planning, development and implementation of building codes standards and norms – including application and compliance, construction quality assurance, and planning of land occupation –rural and urban settlements.”

### **a. Economic Development**

Cities have looked for greater coordination with national and regional governments, the private sector, and international cooperation, to face the challenges of urban unemployment:

- Some progress has been made in implementing new approaches to urban management or in applying them in an experimental way. The mayors of the Americas have met on several occasions in the last few years. For example in October 2010, the city of Medellin, Colombia held a “Region Biodiversa” conference that highlighted community revitalization, urban greening, and transport advancements (Metro, Metro Cable, and Metro Plus).

- Several organizations are improving ties between key players in urban renewal that include:

1. [Institute for Transportation and Development Policy](#)
2. [Making Cities Work](#)
3. [International City/County Management Assoc.](#)
4. [United Cities and Local Governments](#)
5. [Cities Alliance](#)
6. [Sustainable Cities Collective](#)
7. [The Clean Air Institute](#)
8. [The Center for Clean Air Policy](#)

Decentralization has opened the way to multidisciplinary approaches to face the challenges of sustainable urbanization. Local authorities in Latin America and the Caribbean strive to create balanced, sustainable cities, enjoying some comparative advantages, in an environment where individual interests and collective services become compatible. Mendoza, Argentina; Curitiba and Porto Alegre, Brazil; Manizales, Colombia; and Quito, Ecuador, have been pioneers in their multidisciplinary and integrated approach to city management.

- Progress has been made in decentralizing education and work training programs. In Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Peru, education programs have been successfully combined with on-the-job training. This is an area where city mayors could contribute because they are in a position to bring together knowledge of the local labor force and production potential as an input to shape educational and training programs.

- In Venezuela, support to decentralization has been given as called for in the IX National Plan and the Agenda Venezuela. A number of activities and services, such as health, education, sports, youth, and nutrition, have been transferred to state and municipal governments. The Intergovernmental Fund for Decentralization provides financial support to decentralize public administration, through the evaluation and financing of projects submitted by state and local governments.

- Lima, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Chinandega and Leon (Nicaragua), and Medellin (Colombia) have undertaken programs aimed at facilitating municipal access to capital markets. They have also implemented programs to improve the capacity of low-income groups to obtain credit for financing productive activities, through the regularization of property titles, and the improvement of urban infrastructure and housing. Both Mexico City and Medellin are implementing comprehensive strategic plans, including the strengthening of their competitive position and Bogota is completing a similar plan.

- In Bolivia, Honduras, and Nicaragua, incentives have been set in place to promote the involvement of local communities and governments in the joint planning of projects of construction and maintenance of urban infrastructure. Porto Alegre, Brazil, has broken ground in achieving the participation of different sectors of society in the preparation of the capital budget for the city. Other cities following this practice are Mendoza, Argentina; La Florida, Chile; Cali, Colombia; Tijuana, Mexico; and Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela.

## **b. Housing**

Some innovative approaches have been taken to face the unsatisfied demand for housing in the hemisphere:

- Several countries and many cities have diversified the instruments and mechanisms applicable to urban land acquisition, zoning, development, and regulation. Colombia, for instance, has enacted a law authorizing cities to appropriate, as resources of the local government, part of the increases in land values caused by administrative decisions. In Mexico, plans have been adopted to redistribute profits flowing from incorporation of suburban land or adjoining rural areas into the cities among previous owners, infrastructure financing, and environmental protection areas.
- Some Central American countries have undertaken programs to facilitate access to real-estate and capital markets and housing to low-income groups. Urban development is no longer a state monopoly in Latin America and the Caribbean, as there is increased awareness and use of instruments to promote private-sector involvement. Metropolitan areas are conscious of the need for greater coordination between local and national governments in matters of planning, urban development, and environmental protection.

## **c. Eco-efficiency, Pollution Prevention, and Environmental Protection**

Progress has been made in incorporating all potential actors in policies, activities, and financing of environmental protection:

- Peru is one of several countries that have enacted laws to offer economic and fiscal incentives, as well as extended terms to comply with new standards, to those who abide by existing environmental regulations. Brazil, Colombia and Mexico are in the process of establishing some incentives to induce communities, the media, and financial markets to combat industrial pollution. In the United States, The “Red Fields to Green Fields” is a public/private effort that acquires financially distressed properties (real estate “in the red”) and converts them into public parks and adjacent land “banked” for future sustainable development.
- Barbados, Belize, and Trinidad Tobago, all Small Island Developing States (SIDS), recognize the dangers of global warming and the importance of reducing the country's carbon footprint. Green Barbados, a target goal of the 2007 - 2025 National Strategic Plan, seeks to transform the country into a cleaner, more environmentally advanced country. In Belize City, advances in a Waterfront Development Strategy and Fort Point Pedestrian Walk are underway, and in T&T has initiated The Green Fund, established to financially assist registered community groups in activities related to the remediation – remedying environmental damage, reforestation – replanting with trees and conservation of the environment – preservation of the natural environment and wildlife.
- Bilateral and multilateral development agencies have recently developed new principles and operative models to control industrial pollution. These models are based on interaction between governments, producers, and consumers; between business and communities; and between the public sector and the markets. International organizations are bringing forth new ideas regulating industrial pollution and new information on ways to reduce it.
- A substantial portion of multilateral development bank lending has been directed at urban environment and pollution control projects. Large-scale metropolitan sanitation projects in Mexico, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Guatemala made up the lion's share of the environmental portfolio of the IADB. Major projects have also been financed for clean-up programs in Guanabara Bay, Bahia Todos os Santos, and Lake Managua

and the Bank has supported innovative work upgrading low-income settlements in Brazil. With help from the World Bank's \$145 million loan to rehabilitate Bogota, Colombia water resources, the wetlands—once considered an environmental luxury—are also beginning to recover. Sewage interceptors funded in part by the Bank's loan now divert toxic chemicals and wastes from five wetland areas, priming the wetland's self-healing mechanisms. Environmental authorities collaborate with local communities to remove sediment and invasive aquatic plants. Footpaths, bike trails, and overlooks are being planned, and there are high hopes that bird populations will soon rebound.

#### **d. Sustainable Transport**

Cities have a common focus in: reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions growth rates through the promotion of an increase in the patronage of less energy intensive transport modes in cities; and inducing policy changes in favor of sustainable transport projects.

Cities are enacting assessment of environmental benefits and co-benefits of transport interventions to adopt integrated policies on land use and urban transportation aimed at reducing the high expropriation costs associated with land acquisition for building urban transportation infrastructure. The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy works with cities to bring about sustainable transport solutions that cut greenhouse gas emissions, reduce poverty, and improve the quality of urban life.

The city government of Buenos Aires has launched a comprehensive bicycle program. As examples, in Brazil, programs are underway in Rio, Belo Horizonte, and Sao Paolo.

In Bogota, Colombia, the Transmilenio is a successful bus rapid transit program that is spreading to Cartagena.

Mexico City launched its first public bike share program, Ecobici, in February 2010. The system, which features 1,114 bikes and 85 stations, is part of the new Bicycle Mobility Strategy of Mexico City, which seeks to raise the number of cyclists in the city from one to five percent by 2012.

In Guadalajara, the 16-kilometer Macrobus program was inaugurated in March 2009 to be expanded to a 72-kilometer network by 2012.

WRI recently completed in 2010 a document entitled: Modernizing Public Transport that highlights that several LAC cities are transforming their public transport systems to better serve the needs of their populations and the environment.

#### **e. Obstacles**

Rapid urbanization poses serious challenges in terms of infrastructure and housing, common spaces and sustainable transportation, the prevention and correction of pollution the disposal of industrial waste, the promotion of pollution free consumption habits, and the management of sustainable technologies. The accelerated pace of urbanization is creating new forms of social and economic marginality that nurture crime and violence at epidemic levels. The largest urban centers are just beginning to keep track of city crime and are learning the particular forms of metropolitan violence. They are beginning to experiment with new measures capable of effectively curtailing violence.

Decentralization is a means towards an end, not an aim in itself. Most national governments still maintain the structures that were established when the state was the party responsible for urban development. Cities are not yet fully recognized as valid counterparts in national or international discussions about urban development. Many restrictive regulations and long-held traditions of centralized administration

deny them the management of some issues, like school programs and professional training, which they are in a position to undertake. There are also some unwarranted limitations on the management of local finances or on association between local government and the private sector.

Municipal governments suffer from weak structural and operational frameworks. Thus, local authorities are forced to spend an inordinate amount of time and resources to establish the organizational basis needed for planning, financing, implementing, and controlling social infrastructure projects and credit programs for income-generating activities.

Access to capital markets for infrastructure and urban development is still unduly restricted, and sufficient new forms of financing for this purpose have not yet been devised. External financial resources should be used to promote domestic savings and to finance low-cost housing programs in conjunction with domestic resources. Excessive red tape and lack of popular participation in the design and implementation of housing developments hamper their success.

Cities often expand beyond their planned limits, and official and informal systems to provide water, sewerage, waste disposal, and other common services to these areas tend to be insufficient and inefficient.

The existing fiscal and land-use policies are not conducive to facilitating adequate systems of urban transportation, nor is there a favorable environment for private participation in the transportation system. Different interest groups apply pressure to avoid updating and modernizing of urban traffic regulations.

#### **f. Recommendations**

The most promising approaches to urban environmental management are to provide financial incentives and involve communities, business, and governments in consensus building on shared goals and actions. Legislation should be reviewed to allow private-sector participation in urban investment and also to promote joint financing of municipal programs by the national government, the private sector, and local communities. Tax laws should be enacted that take into account local participation in public revenues. Institutional arrangements should also be revised to reflect increasing decentralization. Efforts should continue to include issues relating to urban areas on the agenda of international organizations and national governments.

Regarding the transportation sector, cities should involve the private sector in the construction and operation of transit systems. The issues of low-income housing and regularization of land ownership must be faced head-on by the countries with the direct and active involvement of financing institutions.

## **Annex 1**

### **PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAS**

<http://www.summit-americas.org/boliviaplan.htm>

The Plan of Action refers to four areas under Sustainable Cities: economic development (initiatives 32 to 35), housing (initiatives 36 to 40), pollution prevention and environmental protection (initiatives 38 to 45), and sustainable transport (initiatives 43 and 46).

#### **II.3 Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Recognizing that the primary challenges to the attainment of sustainable development in this area include:

- Incorporation of the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of the population into the productive process by, inter alia, creating jobs through public and private investment and expanding and enhancing access to credit and to environmentally sound technologies;
- Growth in job creation in small and micro-enterprises by simplifying paperwork, bureaucracy, and operations that affect them and by promoting the economic competitiveness and environmental efficiency of these production units in urban as well as rural areas;
- Narrowing of the housing unit gap and expansion of basic infrastructure services through a comprehensive approach to the problem of rapid urban growth, including the use of clean, safe technologies;
- Promotion of the quality of life in cities and communities, taking into account their spatial, economic, social, and environmental circumstances; and
- Assurance of the most efficient and least polluting industrial and transportation practices so as to reduce adverse environmental impact and promote sustainable development in cities and communities.

The Governments will carry out the following initiatives:

Initiative 32. Develop training programs, among others, to increase the efficiency and productivity of labor in order to raise the quality of life, particularly of marginal communities, with due regard for environmental safety in the workplace.

Initiative 33. Develop appropriate policies on migration, promote savings and investment opportunities to create jobs, and develop sustainable means of livelihood, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable sectors.

Initiative 34. Foster job creation in small business and micro-enterprises, favoring their promotion and competitiveness through establishment of a legal and administrative framework, exchange of information and experience, and access to appropriate financial systems, markets, and clean and environmentally sound technologies.

Initiative 35. Request the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to work with subregional financial institutions on the establishment of a support system for micro-credit institutions in order to promote technological innovation, improve the environment, and provide governments with technical assistance for strengthening financial services geared toward small business and micro-enterprise.

Initiative 36. Redouble efforts to meet the housing needs of the poorest and most vulnerable sectors, bearing in mind the need to provide adequate essential services and to improve the environment; and, to that end, request international and subregional financial institutions to lend the greatest possible degree of support to efforts to promote the construction of low-income housing and related infrastructure services.

Initiative 37. Foster the exchange of information and experiences to promote the use of environmentally sound technologies, including appropriate standards for building low-cost housing.

Initiative 38. Strengthen programs relating to urban settlements through partnerships between the public and private sectors for urban planning and development, taking account of environmental questions and the situation of landless and homeless persons.

Initiative 39. Promote international technical and financial cooperation, including horizontal cooperation, to carry out urban development and environmental sanitation programs.

Initiative 40. Develop legal, financial, and institutional frameworks which support local government involvement and facilitate private-sector participation in the financing and delivery of urban services and improved environmental management.

Initiative 41. Develop strategies that encourage policies and programs for prevention of and protection against pollution, cleaning up of the environment, and waste treatment, strengthening sustainable urban development. These policies may include public-private sector associations, market-based programs, and other volunteer programs.

Initiative 42. Develop a hemispheric framework for the exchange of information on and experiences in successful pollution prevention and waste treatment efforts as an appropriate means of managing the environment so as to support national policies in these areas.

Initiative 43. Promote the exchange of information and experiences among the mayors of the Hemisphere on the most appropriate practices for urban environmental stewardship, promotion of non-polluting consumer practices, sustainable transportation, environmental impact, and sewage treatment.

Initiative 44. Develop policies and programs to see that the poor and most vulnerable are affected as little as possible by environmental degradation and are able to share equitably in the benefits of environmental protection and, to this end, request the international and subregional financial institutions to support as strongly as possible the acquisition of environmentally sound technologies for their productive activities.

Initiative 45. Foster the inclusion of sustainable development in urban development plans, including mechanisms for evaluating the environmental impact.

Initiative 46. Promote cooperation in order to continue the development and implementation of national plans for the gradual elimination of lead in gasoline and the improvement of public transportation and other means of transport to make them environmentally sound.